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The African Heritage Magazine

PREMIERE ISSUE

WINTER 2022

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MALI'S KING: MANSA MUSA

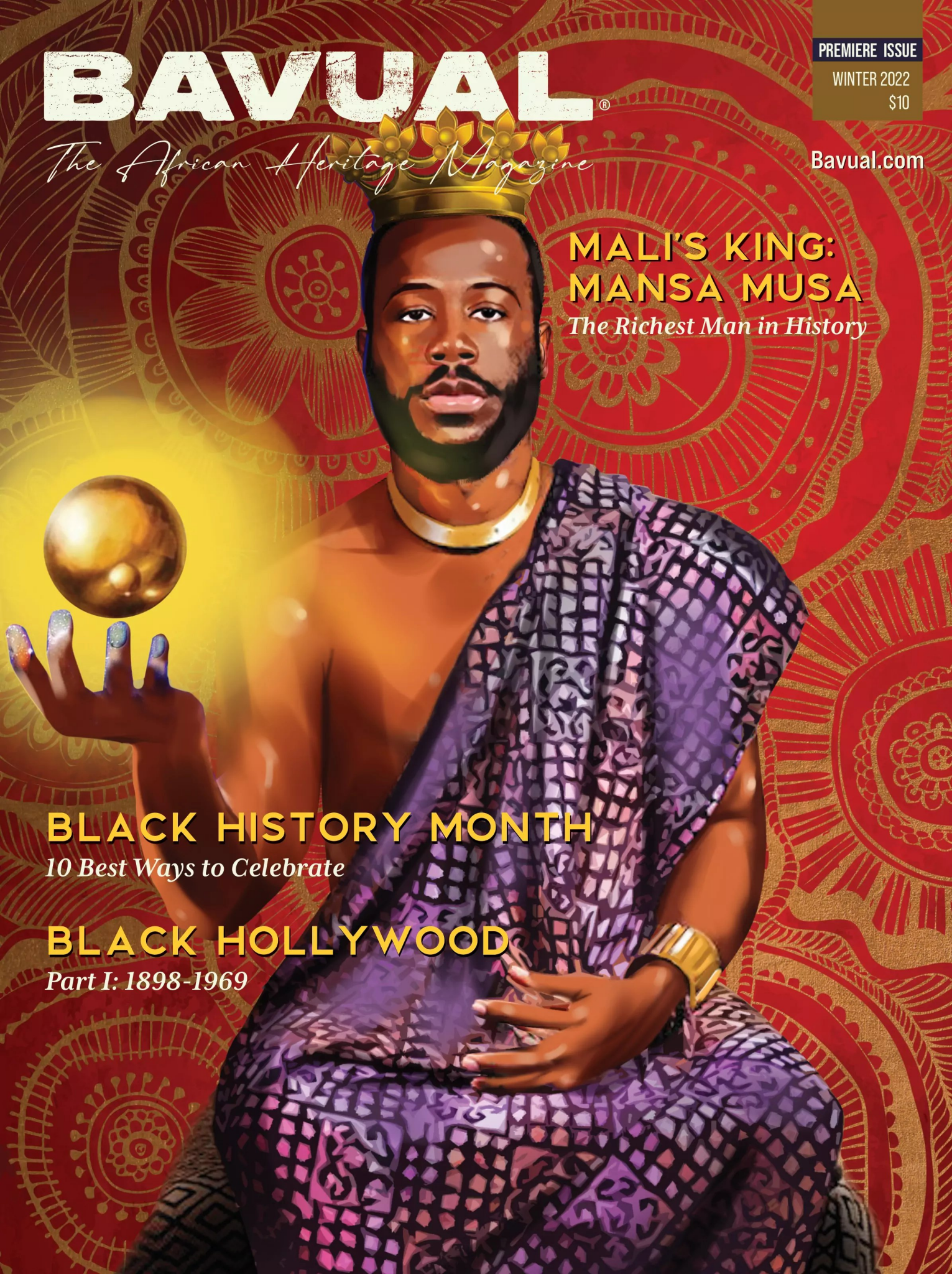
The Richest Man in History

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

10 Best Ways to Celebrate

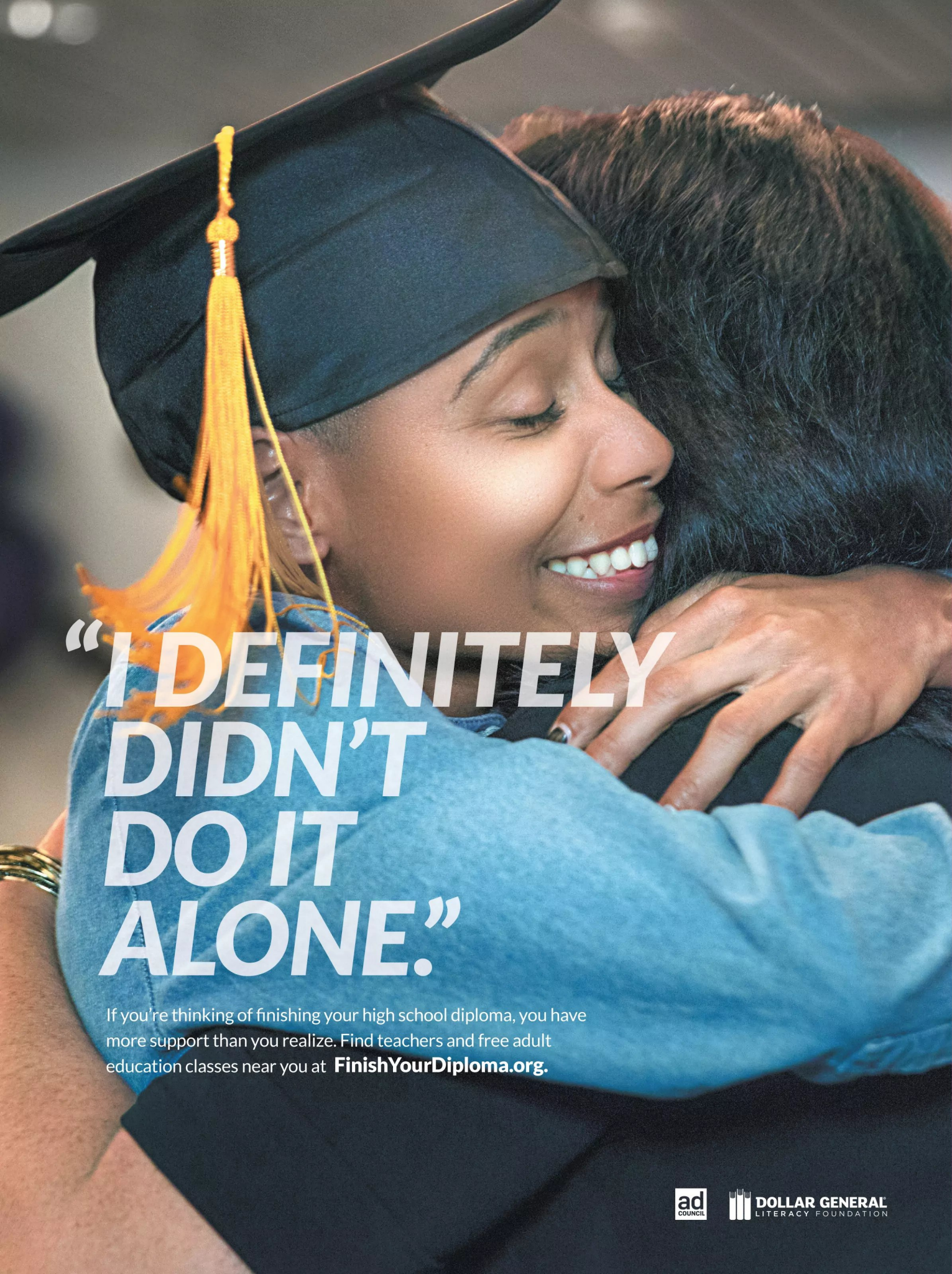
BLACK HOLLYWOOD

Part I: 1898-1969



VISIT...

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A young woman with dark hair, wearing a black graduation cap with a gold tassel and a blue graduation gown, is smiling and hugging someone. Her eyes are closed, and she has a joyful expression. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting like a school or a ceremony hall.

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ALONE.”**

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Photo credit: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

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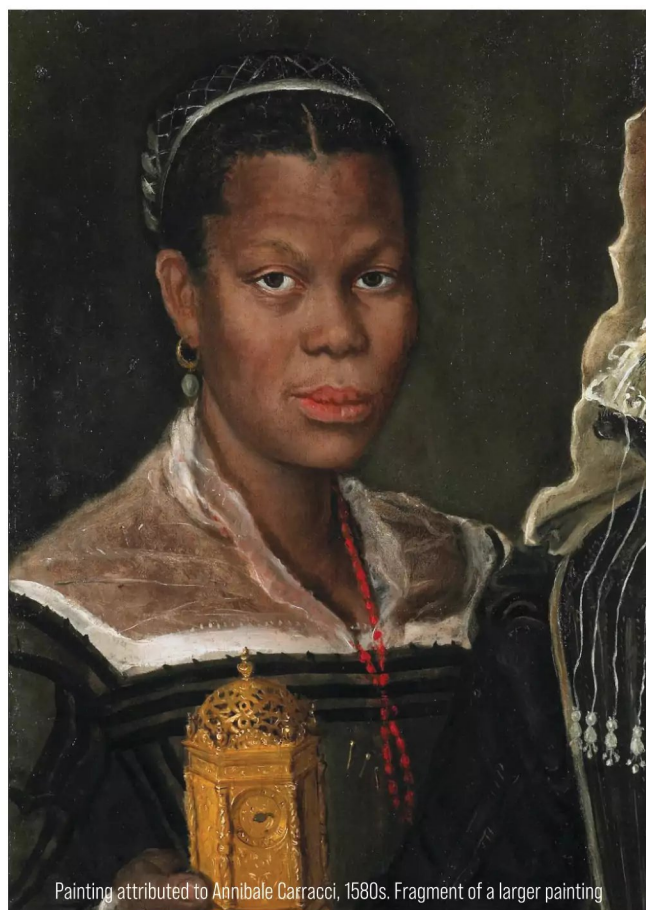
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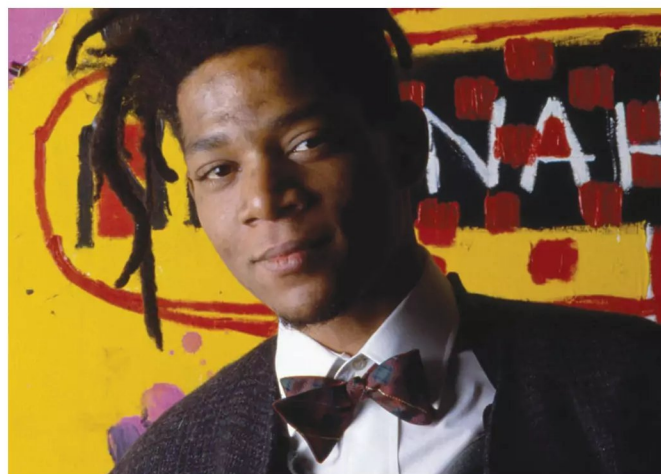


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BAVUAL is published quarterly (4 issues per year)
by Vantage Point Planet, LLC, a division of Birkett Communications, Inc.
President/CEO: Earl A. Birkett

Annual Subscription: \$40

Advertising: Contact us for advertising rates and placement, 212-419-5831

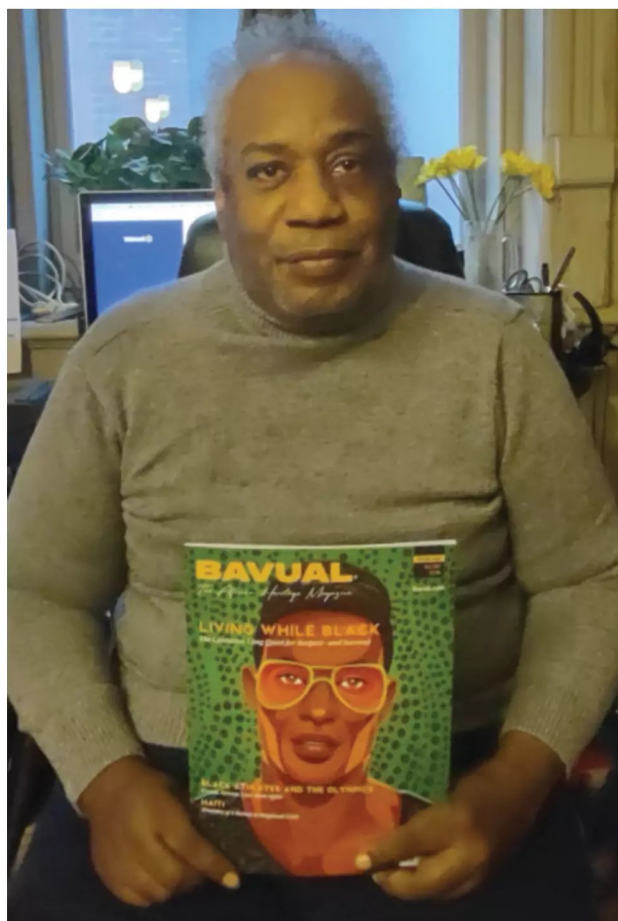
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**“THOSE WHO DO NOT
LEARN FROM HISTORY ARE
DOOMED TO REPEAT IT.”**

— GEORGE SANTAYANA

WHY BAVUAL?

Earl A. Birkett

This debut issue of *BAVUAL: The African Heritage Magazine* is the culmination of a dream that has consumed me for 50 years, since I was a lad of 11. As a boy, I dreamed of being a magazine publisher like my mentors: John H. Johnson Jr., founder of *Ebony* and *Jet*; Henry R. Luce, who created the *Time-Life* empire; and the fictional publisher Glenn Howard (played by my role model, Gene Barry) in the 1960s TV series *The Name of the Game*. It took a while, but I finally did it.

So why *BAVUAL* and not some other type of publication? Simply put, it is filling a void in the magazine world and in the public discourse. To Big Media’s credit, issues and history pertaining to people of African descent are finally being given some of the attention that they need and deserve, such as through their coverage in the landmark “1619 Project” published in *The New York Times*. However, it is still far from enough.

George Santayana’s warning that we ignore history at our peril has never been truer than it is now. I do not fear the past any more than I fear the truth, because both are intertwined. Much like with a bodily or mental disease, in order to heal properly, you must first be expertly diagnosed to identify your exact problem. Likewise, a great nation and a world that seeks to rid itself of division, hate, inequality and ignorance must put its history under a microscope in order to change it.

I am now on the verge of 62, and after all I’ve been through in life, I am still an optimist about the human race. My study of human history has taught me one thing: We screw up, but we also have the capacity for greatness, if we try for it. Through its pages, I want *BAVUAL* to point to what we have done, warts and all, so that we can make the remainder of the 21st century and beyond better than what came before it. That’s the magazine’s mission, nothing more, nothing less.

Question is, will you join us? I have faith.

THE DRIFT

A “Marshall Plan” for Black America

Robert L. Johnson, billionaire and founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET), is a man with a plan. A really big plan—and one that I completely endorse. Johnson’s solution to bridge the equality gap—a canyon, really—between white and black Americans (see BAVUAL’s article on Reparations on page 32) is for the federal government to pay \$14 trillion to be divided between each of the 46.9 million black people now alive in America. That’s roughly 298,507.46 per person. By comparison, many blacks have only gotten \$3,200 from the COVID-19 stimulus checks.

The Johnson proposal, given in an interview with *VICE News*, contains this most-revealing quote:

Reparations would require the entire country to ... admit that the result of slavery has been 200 years of systemic racism. For that reason, Black folks have been denied \$13-15 trillion of wealth and therefore we as a country now must atone by paying Black people of all stripes—the rich ones, the poor ones, and the middle—out of our pocket.

Bingo! It seems this very rich and successful black man, obviously a smart negotiator, has reasoned it out. Why are we settling for crumbs and not the \$13-15 trillion of wealth he says (and I believe) we are owed? That would give me, Earl Birkett, and nearly 47 million other African Americans not just a measly three thousand pandemic bucks. That’s enough to buy a house or provide seed money to start a business (like, say, BAVUAL).

Photo credit: Alex Brandon/AP



Photo credit: Glenn Koenig/Getty Images

That multitrillion-dollar figure is Johnson’s and my Marshall Plan for black America, something we as a people have been clamoring for but denied since 1865. It would greatly elevate all African Americans to a more equal status, help bind the racial wounds that have plagued us for centuries, and pump enough money into the economy to make all Americans as rich as Croesus.

Given the current national environment of division, hate, selfishness and greed, my plan is not likely to happen any time soon. But I *do* have a dream.

“REPARATIONS WOULD REQUIRE THE ENTIRE COUNTRY TO ... ADMIT THAT THE RESULT OF SLAVERY HAS BEEN 200 YEARS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM. FOR THAT REASON, BLACK FOLKS HAVE BEEN DENIED \$13-15 TRILLION OF WEALTH AND THEREFORE WE AS A COUNTRY NOW MUST ATONE BY PAYING BLACK PEOPLE OF ALL STRIPES—THE RICH ONES, THE POOR ONES, AND THE MIDDLE—OUT OF OUR POCKET.”

—ROBERT L. JOHNSON



\$5 a Month Slaves Built the White House and the U.S. Capitol

Many of us grew up having been taught the story of Benjamin Banneker, the African American who “built” Washington, D.C., back in the 1790s. (Actually, he surveyed the city and laid out its street grid.) But did you know that the most enduring symbols of the nation’s Capitol—the White House and the Capitol Building to name only two (another is the Smithsonian Institution)—were mostly constructed by enslaved Africans who were paid \$5 per month?

A Washington, D.C., reporter, Edward Hotaling, uncovered this fact by researching old pay slips from U.S. Treasury Department archives dating from 1792 to 1800 that show that 400 of the 600 laborers were black slaves—and that their \$5 monthly pay was confiscated by their owners, meaning that they received *nothing*. (Slave labor was used to complete the Capitol in the 1860s as well.) Not even women and children (they were used to mold clay in kilns) were spared the grueling 12-hour-a-day, six-day shifts.

To add insult to injury, the history books ignored the toil of these African Americans for 150 years, until 2010, when a then-bipartisan Congress erected commemorative plaques inside the building they built to honor those who had no choice but to sacrifice for their country. It reads: *This original exterior wall was constructed between 1793 and 1800 of sandstone quarried by laborers, including enslaved African Americans who were an important part of the work force that built the United States Capitol.*



The Zion Clark Story

Photo credit: inews.co.uk

By Kristen Jones

When it comes to undeniable strength, determination and sacrifice, no one embodies these terms better than Zion Clark. He's a 24-year-old phenom in sports who happens to live with caudal regression syndrome, a condition that causes the bottom half of one's body to not fully develop.

Born to a drug-addicted mother who gave him up for adoption, Zion suffered even more hardship when he was bullied and abused at his various foster homes. The kids were mean and didn't understand how to fight him, so they became even meaner. Not being easily shaken, Zion suppressed his emotions and used them to express himself in various sports, where he began setting records and making a name for himself.

The once-bullied athlete ended up being adopted into a loving family at the age of 17, and soon, his childhood interest in wrestling landed him a spot on his high school varsity team where he set a record of 33-15 by the time he graduated. With



Photo credit: Kent State University

a stable household, he was also able to focus on his academics and on the track; in 2021, he became the fastest man on two hands (for 20 meters), making it into the Guinness World Records.

A brief Netflix documentary about him simply titled *ZION* was released in 2018, providing many people their first glimpse of this young man's incredible character and grit. His book *Zion Unmatched* also chronicles his

struggles and let's readers see him for the kind-hearted young man he is.

More than just a sports star and fighter, he's also entered the dating field lately and shows off his girlfriend on social media. While the odds were truly against him at an early age, with a loving partner by his side cheering him on and thousands of people coming together to support him, there is nothing Zion cannot do.



President Obama's Inauguration

January 20, 2009

By Kristen Jones

In just four years, Barack Obama rose from obscurity to the pinnacle of political power. He became a man who was both feared and loved by millions across the world.

Obama was born in Hawaii in 1961, the son of Barack Obama Sr., a Kenyan-born student at the University of Hawaii, and his white wife, Ann Dunham of Kansas. (The couple later divorced).



Inauguration Day, January 20, 2009

Photo credit: Getty Images



“THERE’S NOT A LIBERAL AMERICA AND A CONSERVATIVE AMERICA; THERE’S THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. THERE’S NOT A BLACK AMERICA AND WHITE AMERICA AND LATINO AMERICA AND ASIAN AMERICA; THERE’S THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.”



Election Day, November 4, 2008: History is made.

Beginning in the early 1980s, Obama cut his teeth in community organizing and, after earning a law degree from Harvard, began his political rise with election to the Illinois state Senate in 1996. As a state legislator, he fought for underprivileged Illinoisans and expanded healthcare, ended loose financial laws, and sought to change the future of welfare and criminal justice laws.

In 2004, Obama was elected U.S. senator, defeating Alan Keyes, a conservative Republican recruited from California when the previous GOP candidate dropped out in the midst of a sex scandal. The race gave the nation a look at two black opponents

running for the U.S Senate for the first time.

Obama attracted national attention when he was chosen to deliver the keynote address at the Democratic convention in July of the same year; his powerful speech brought a message that was needed and was well received:

There's not a liberal America and a conservative America; there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America.

In his brief time in the Senate, Obama became a force to be reckoned with as he was seen everywhere and people wanted to know all about him. Once a little-known author, he now had the nation following his every move, including a trip to visit his father in his father's hometown in Kenya.

The way Obama spoke drew emotion, and young and minority voters in 2008 felt

that he was the voice of the future—a fighter for change! Running on a slogan of “Yes We Can,” he defeated his opponent for the Democratic presidential nomination, New York’s Senator Hillary Clinton, and became the first African American to be nominated for the presidency by a major political party.

When he faced Republican Sen. John McCain in the general election, Obama’s character was attacked on a daily basis, with many questioning his ability to lead the nation. His counterparts hammered him on his supposed unsuitability, citing everything from his Kenyan heritage to not having enough experience in politics. The United States became engulfed in a figurative “race war,” but in the end, Obama was the clear winner, especially after he displayed an even temperament when the economy fell into a Great Recession in September 2008, two months before the election, and won the endorsement of Colin Powell, a warrior-statesman respected by most Americans. He pledged to end the war in Iraq, solve the economic problems facing Americans, and offer affordable healthcare to many who otherwise had none. He became a model for black Americans to follow and for white Americans to take notice of.

As his strong backbone and partner for life, Michelle Obama went from being an obscure figure alongside her husband to being one of the most talked-



Obama's mother, Ann Dunham

Photo credit: AP

about women of our time. She became a fashion icon and stood by Barack's side, always displaying style and grace. As a family man raising two daughters, Barack brought his family along for the journey to the White House and won his bid for the presidency with nearly 53 percent of the popular vote, becoming the nation's first black president. Americans everywhere celebrated the dawn of a new era and unsurprisingly voted him in for a second term in 2012. The Obamas were suddenly media stars, and it seemed we all gained a new sense of accomplishment along with them.

Like other presidents before him, he dealt with serious issues before the public eye—issues that had to be dealt with correctly or the result could affect the world. When the Great Recession occurred, the nation was forced to deal with one of the worst economic declines in U.S. history, starting in December 2007 and ending in June 2009. The collapse of the housing market, fueled by low interest rates, easy credit,



Barack Obama, Sr. and Jr.

Photo credit: Obama for America

insufficient regulation, and toxic subprime mortgages, led to the economic crisis. Americans were given an answer from President Obama in the form of fiscal stimulus programs that used different combinations of government spending and tax cuts. These programs included the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

With healthcare being a platform that was important to Obama, he introduced the Affordable Care Act, which was designed to improve the affordability and quality of healthcare for Americans. Commonly known as Obamacare, it was signed into law in 2010 and put in place comprehensive reforms that improve access to affordable health coverage for everyone and protect consumers from abusive insurance company practices.

The terror attack on America on September 11, 2001, is no doubt one of the worst events in U.S. history. When it was found that Osama Bin Laden was behind this brutal attack, the administration was forced

to deal with him directly. After much thought and debate, President Obama decided to deliver a strike that ultimately eliminated the terrorist. Some praised him for this, while others frowned upon the methods used in the killing. This decision and the backlash remain among the most important and controversial decisions during Obama's term of office.

President Obama presided over a drone strike for the first time on January 22, 2009, only two days after taking office. The strike missed its target, and *Newsweek* reported that Obama was made aware almost immediately that innocents died in the attack. The use of drones aligned with Obama's ambition to keep up the war against Al-Qaeda while extricating the U.S. military from intractable, costly ground wars in the Middle East and Asia. Still, the targeted-killing program caused a lot of controversy as many Americans thought the innocent lives that were being lost were more than necessary.

The midterm elections delivered significant blows to congressional Democrats. In 2010, Democrats lost six seats in the Senate and 63 seats in the House, costing them control of the lower chamber. In 2014, Democrats lost another 13 seats in the House and a staggering nine seats in the Senate, this time losing them the Senate and completing a Republican takeover of Congress. Obama was considered the reason for the change in power, a loss of Congress that hadn't been seen since President Dwight Eisenhower was in office.

(According to Ronald Brownstein, "One clear message of the Obama years is that Democrats cannot consistently control Congress or most state governments unless they



Obama with his family in Kenya

Photo credit: Tony Karumba/AFP/Getty Images

compete better among white voters, especially those without college degrees.”)

Obama was handed an unusually hostile Congress, one whose GOP members made no secret of their intention to thwart the president at every opportunity. On four separate instances, the Republican-controlled Congress thought it right to investigate the Obama administration. They spent many hours probing the smallest details of his life—right down to his wearing a tan suit at a White House press conference! Criticized many times in the media, Obama consistently rose above the naysayers whom he believed paid more attention to trivial nitpicking than proposing realistic solutions to the many public policy issues.

On March 16, 2016, President Obama nominated Merrick Garland for associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States to succeed Antonin Scalia, who had died one month earlier. Immediately following the president’s announcement of Garland, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced a firm refusal to consider nominees to the Supreme Court until the next presidential inauguration. Citing what he called “the Biden Rule,”



The Harvard Law Review president (center), early 1990s

Photo credit: Harvard Law School Library

McConnell argued that there should not be a nomination so close to the next presidential and congressional election, but rather that the nomination should await the outcome of that election.

Before Merrick Garland was announced as Obama’s nominee to the Supreme Court, he was a prosecutor and the linchpin in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing investigation and ultimate convictions of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. What many thought would be an opportunity to shift the Court’s ideological bent slightly leftward was ultimately denied when Garland’s nomination was ignored. Although the president fought hard for him, Garland’s nomination expired on January 3, 2017, with the end of the 114th Congress, after languishing 293 days. (Donald Trump, Obama’s successor as president, consistently opposed the Garland nomination during the presidential campaign. Soon after taking office, Trump nominated Neil Gorsuch to fill



The team that took out Osama Bin Laden watching it all happen

Photo credit: Pete Souza, official White House photographer



The tan suit that shocked Republicans

Photo credit: Olivier Douliery/DPA/Zuma Press.com

the vacancy caused by Justice Scalia’s death; he was confirmed by the Senate in April 2017.)

At the conclusion of his term on January 20, 2017, President Obama passed his office on to self-promoter and television personality Donald Trump, the surprise winner of the November 8, 2016, election. The former president continued his efforts to make changes in America, and his presence was most recently felt when his former vice president, Joe Biden, was elected president in 2020.

It’s still often said that the nation will never feel the way it felt from 2009-2017 when Barack Obama was president. It was truly a time of hope, a time of change, and a time of redemption.

THEY ALSO RAN

Previous Black Presidential Candidates

If victory has a thousand fathers, failure is indeed an orphan. For every President Obama, there have been many who tried for the brass ring, never obtaining it. Still others hope to be The One Who Does in future elections—if, of course, America remains a democracy. Among the most notable candidates:

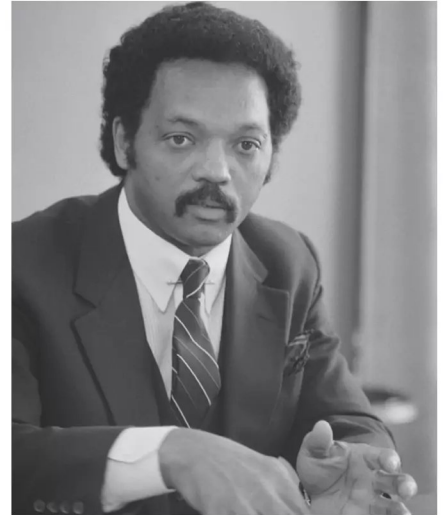


George Edwin Taylor, 1904



Shirley Chisholm, 1972

Photo credit: Thomas J. O'Halloran/U.S. News & World Report



Jesse Jackson, 1984 and 1988

George Edwin Taylor, 1904

Taylor, a journalist, editor and political activist, was the first black presidential candidate, having appeared on the ballot as the nominee of the National Negro Liberty Party. His candidacy was largely ignored, and states even refused to record his votes. Nevertheless, he may have gotten 65,000.

Shirley Chisholm, 1972

Chisholm, a U.S. congresswoman from New York and the first black woman to run for president, electrified audiences with her powerful speaking skills (her motto was “unbought and unbossed”), but it failed to win her the Democratic nomination; she finished near the bottom.

Jesse Jackson, 1984 and 1988

Jackson, a veteran civil rights leader and top aide to Martin

Luther King Jr., made history by waging two charismatic campaigns for the Democratic nomination. He came closest in 1988, when he won several primaries (a first for a black candidate) and finished second in the delegate count, behind Michael Dukakis, the eventual nominee. For the first time, Americans could seriously envision a black person becoming president.

Al Sharpton and Carol Moseley-Braun, 2004

Sharpton, a New York-based activist, and Moseley-Braun, a one-term U.S. senator from Illinois—the first black woman ever elected to the upper chamber of Congress—both took a stab at winning the Democratic nomination, falling way short. Sharpton, however, added humor to what was considered a dull

race. (Moseley-Braun’s old Senate seat was won by Obama in that year’s election.)

Herman Cain, 2012

Cain, a successful CEO (Godfather’s Pizza), was the first black person to be a serious contender for the Republican Party’s presidential nomination. Known for his catchy “9-9-9” tax slogan, he was briefly the front-runner but eventually dropped out over sexual allegations against him.

Kamala Harris, Deval Patrick and Cory Booker, 2020

Three African Americans tried to gain the Democratic Party’s nomination; each of them faded away after a promising start. Booker, a U.S. senator from New Jersey, dropped out before the first caucus in Iowa, and Patrick, Massachusetts’ first black



Al Sharpton, 2004

Photo credit: Charlie Neibergall/AP



Herman Cain, 2012

Photo credit: Nicholas Kamm/AFP/Getty Images

governor, gained little attention. Only Harris, a California senator and an early dropout herself, walked away with a booby prize: the vice presidency under President Biden.

2024 and Beyond

Who's next? Harris and Booker could try again for the brass ring, as well as Georgia's senator Raphael Warnock. Among Republicans, there is talk of the lone black GOP senator, Tim Scott of South Carolina. However, since no one saw Obama (or Donald Trump for that manner) coming, the next president may not be any of these potential candidates.

Other Also-Rans: Eldridge Cleaver (1968), Dick Gregory (1968), Lenora Fulani (1988, 1992), Alan Keyes (1996, 2000, 2008), Cynthia McKinney (2008), Kanye West (2020)



Carol Moseley-Braun, 2004

Photo credit: Steve Matteo/AP



Cory Booker, 2020

Photo credit: AP/Shutterstock



Kamala Harris, 2020

Photo credit: *The Daily Beast*



Tim Scott, 2024?

Photo credit: Susan Walsh/AP



Deval Patrick, 2020

Photo credit: Suzanne Kreiter/*The Boston Globe*/Getty Images

African Americans and Women Change the Face of Urban Living

By Kristen Jones



Richard Hatcher Photo credit: Bettmann Archive



Harold Washington

While the “new” black mayor phenomenon may seem like a new trend today, the first African American mayors were actually elected during Reconstruction in the Southern United States beginning about 1867. After this period ended around 1876, it became increasingly difficult for African Americans to compete in elections due to racial discrimination such as Jim Crow laws. The election or appointment of black mayors would then become a rare occurrence until the 1960s when blacks again began to win mayoral positions following the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement and passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Crime and policing, education, gentrification and COVID-19 are some of the

major issues challenging city government executives today; with the exception of the COVID-19 pandemic, these issues are nothing new for city leaders.

The following African American mayors made history and paved the way for a new generation of black mayors today.

The first African American elected as the mayor of a large U.S. city was **Richard Hatcher**, who was sworn into office in 1968 and held his position in Gary, Ind., until 1988. His first mayoral race was intensely fought and was marked by corruption, racial violence, voter purges, intimidation, and blatant vote rigging—a familiar refrain in future elections in many major U.S. cities. Hatcher rose to the top, however, and defeated incumbent mayor Martin Katz.

Carl Stokes, who was elected

on the same day as Hatcher but hours later, became the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city when he was elected mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, in November 1967. He later became a news anchorman, judge and United States ambassador.

Ken Gibson was the first African American elected mayor of any major city in the Northeastern United States. Gibson served as the mayor of Newark, N.J., (1970-1986) at a time when race riots and protests were a norm in the state. He defeated incumbent Hugh Addonizio, who was later convicted of extortion and conspiracy. Thought to bring a new light to Newark, Gibson worked to raise employment rates and keep its African American residents from fleeing

AN ENCOURAGING SIGN OF EMPOWERMENT IS THAT BLACK WOMEN MAYORS LEAD EIGHT OF THE 100 CITIES WITH THE LARGEST POPULATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, ACCORDING TO DATA FROM THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN WOMEN AND POLITICS (CAWP) AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY.



Maynard Jackson



Tom Bradley Photo credit: UCLA Library Film & Television Archive

the city in a time of uncertainty.

Maynard Jackson, an attorney from Georgia and a member of the Democratic Party, was elected in 1973 at the age of 35 as the first black mayor of Atlanta and of any major city in the South. He served three terms (1974–1982, 1990–1994), making him the second longest-serving mayor of Atlanta, after six-term mayor William B. Hartsfield (1937–1941, 1942–1962). He is notable also for public works projects, primarily the new Maynard H. Jackson International Terminal at the Atlanta airport, and for greatly increasing minority business participation in the city. After his death, the William B. Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport was renamed Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport to honor his service to the

expansion of the airport, the city and its people.

Ernest Morial, a leading civil rights advocate, was the first African American mayor of New Orleans, serving from 1978 to 1986. He was the father of **Marc Morial**, who subsequently served as mayor of New Orleans from 1994 to 2002.

Harold Washington, a lawyer and one-time U.S. congressman and Illinois state legislator, was the 51st mayor of Chicago, the first African American to hold the office made famous by Richard J. Daley. He served from 1983 until his sudden death by a heart attack in 1987. His narrow election is still remembered as among the most racially divisive in Chicago and U.S. history.

Tom Bradley, who served on the Los Angeles police force for 23 years, was elected to the

City Council in 1963 and as the city's mayor in 1973—the first black person to win both offices. His 20 years in office marks the longest tenure by any mayor in the city's history. His election as mayor in 1973 also made him the second black mayor of a major U.S. city. Defeated in two tries for the California governorship, Bradley retired in 1993 after his approval ratings began dropping subsequent to the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

David Dinkins crowned a wide-ranging career in New York City government as the Big Apple's 106th mayor from 1990 to 1993, becoming the first African American to hold the office. Before entering politics, Dinkins was among the more than 20,000 Montford Point Marines—the first African American U.S. Marines—and served from 1945 to 1946.



David Dinkins Photo credit: Frankie Ziths/Associated Press



Eric Adams Photo credit: Krystal-B



Sharon Pratt Dixon Photo credit: Jana Fineman/Sygma



Muriel Bowser Photo credit: AP



Lori Lightfoot Photo credit: Manuel Martinez/WBEZ

He graduated *cum laude* from Howard University and received his law degree from Brooklyn Law School in 1956. Dinkins lost his bid for re-election in a tight race against former U.S. prosecutor Rudy Giuliani in a racially charged environment following the race riots in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, in 1991.

Other mayors of note during this period:

Wilson Goode, mayor of Philadelphia (1984-1992), was the first African American to hold that office. He served during a period that included the controversial MOVE police action and house bombing in 1985.

Willie Brown, powerful ex-speaker of the California State Assembly (and patron of a rising

politician named Kamala Harris), was twice elected (1995 and 1999) mayor of San Francisco, the first African American to hold that office. The *San Francisco Chronicle* called Brown “one of San Francisco’s most notable mayors,” adding that he had “celebrity beyond the city’s boundaries.”

Sharon Pratt Dixon, an attorney, was the third mayor of the District of Columbia, from 1991 to 1995, the first African American woman in that position.

Walter Washington was technically the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city, having served as mayor-commissioner of the capital city

before it achieved home rule in 1971; he was also elected mayor in 1974 for a single term.

The march to mayoral power continued in 2021, with landmark elections. **Eric Adams**, a former NYPD captain and local politician, was elected New York City’s second black mayor on an anti-crime platform that emphasized a controversial return to racial profiling in high-crime areas. Pennsylvania State Representative **Ed Gainey** became the first black mayor of Pittsburgh, the state’s second-largest city. (Gainey’s sister had been shot to death by a stalker in 2016.) Others in the winner’s circle were Kansas City’s **Tyrone Garner**, former deputy police

chief and Army vet, and **Ken Welch** in St. Petersburg, Florida.

An encouraging sign of empowerment is that black women mayors lead eight of the 100 cities with the largest populations in the United States, according to data from the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University. They include Chicago (**Lori Lightfoot**, also the first lesbian mayor of that city); Washington, D.C. (**Muriel Bowser** is also that city's first lesbian CEO); and San Francisco (**London Breed**).

Black mayors have also penetrated the Deep South in the guise of **Chokwe Antar Lumumba** of Jackson, Miss., and **Randall L. Woodfin** of Birmingham, Ala., the scene of one of the worst racial flashpoints since the Civil War, back in the 1960s.

The vast majority of African American mayors belong to the Democratic Party. Research on 55 large U.S. cities with black mayors shows that in July 2020, some 50 mayors were Democrats, four were Independents, and only one was a member of the Republican Party.

Many African Americans were glued to their television sets to witness these new leaders being sworn in and see that their vote counted. These new mayors constitute a rise in African American political power, and it might not be long before what is now being seen as a "trend" becomes a new normality.

The problems facing African Americans need to be addressed, and with the election of new leaders who can empathize with their problems, progress seems more possible than ever. As a wise person once said, a ripple of change can lead to a stream, then a river, then an ocean.



Photo credit: Nathan Peracini

The Strange Case of Buffalo's India Walton

The 19th century novelist Finley Peter Dunne once wrote a character named Mr. Dooley who said, "Politics ain't beanbag." He meant to say that politics is a blood sport, meant to be played only by those with strong stomachs. American history is littered with stories of political chicanery and sometimes outright corruption, in big cities, small towns, and on the farm and ranch. Dooley also added this chauvinistic line: "'Tis a man's game, an' women, childer, cripples an' prohybitionists'd do well to keep out iv it." Rarely has this aphorism been put to the test more than during the past six years in U.S. politics, an era that saw the rise of the poster boy of privileged cheating, Donald J. Trump.

One recent example of hardball politics American-style is the 2021 mayor's race in the Western New York city of Buffalo, near Niagara Falls. The mayor since 2006 has been **Byron Brown**, an entrenched establishment Democrat (Buffalo has not elected a Republican as mayor since 1965) who has presided over a city that is almost evenly divided between whites and African Americans and that has borne all the earmarks of many Northern big cities since the 1970s: urban decline brought about by deindustrialization and relocation of the middle class to the suburbs and the Sun Belt. The upshot is that decline has left an urgent need to provide a safety net for the large underclass that makes up the remaining population of 278,000, a need that was considered inadequately met by Mayor Brown.

Stepping in to challenge the mayor, a political Goliath, was a young (39) black female David, **India B. Walton**, an avowed democratic socialist (she is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America) who ran on a platform of bringing reform to Buffalo's political establishment. Her campaign served to highlight the schism in the national Democratic Party between so-called *corporate*—represented by Brown—who seek to maintain the status quo and *progressives*—represented by Walton—who want to deliver social services to the 99 percent of society that they claim has been overlooked by the elite 1 percent.

Walton nearly pulled it off, shocking the city and the national party by defeating the incumbent mayor in the June primary by 7 percentage points. Brown, not taking rejection for an answer, mounted a write-in campaign and won the November election, beating Walton by almost 20 points.

Despite this temporary setback for Walton and the progressive cause, it remains to be seen which side will eventually emerge with control of the Democratic Party. As *The Buffalo News* put it after the election, "Walton may have awakened a potent progressive force in Buffalo politics."

A Soldier's Soldier

By Earl A. Birkett

Colin Luther Powell could have had it all. As chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the victorious four-star general who had flushed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard out of Kuwait in 1991 was poised to have the Republican Party's 1996 presidential nomination handed to him on a silver platter. Like his military predecessor Dwight David Eisenhower 44 years earlier, he stood a very good chance of beating the Democrat—in this case President Bill Clinton—at the polls in November, thereby becoming the first black president of the United States.

Of course, he decided not to go for it, to the surprise of some and the disappointment of many. It is said that a key factor in his refusal to run was the concern of his wife of 34 years, Alma, that he might be assassinated. Another reason might be that after a career in the U.S. Army that began with a commission as a second lieutenant in 1958, it was preferable to enjoy private life and the luxuries that could be provided by a \$6 million book deal to write his autobiography, *My American Journey* (Ballantine Books, 1995). Whatever the reason, he passed on the opportunity of a lifetime.

I prefer to believe that the decision not to run comes from another place, one that is seldom mentioned but was typical of his life pattern: Colin Powell was, and always had been, a good and loyal soldier. His preference was to follow the orders given by others, seldom to be the one giving them. That came from a deep and abiding love for military service, formed while he was an ROTC student at New York's City College: *It was only once I was in college, about six months into college, when I found something that I liked, and that was ROTC, Reserve Officer Training Corps, in the military. And I not only liked it, but I was pretty good at it. That's what you really have to look for in life, something that you like, and something that you think you're pretty good at.*



"IT WAS ONLY ONCE I WAS IN COLLEGE, ABOUT SIX MONTHS INTO COLLEGE, WHEN I FOUND SOMETHING THAT I LIKED, AND THAT WAS ROTC, RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING CORPS, IN THE MILITARY. AND I NOT ONLY LIKED IT, BUT I WAS PRETTY GOOD AT IT. THAT'S WHAT YOU REALLY HAVE TO LOOK FOR IN LIFE, SOMETHING THAT YOU LIKE, AND SOMETHING THAT YOU THINK YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD AT. AND IF YOU CAN PUT THOSE TWO THINGS TOGETHER, THEN YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK, AND JUST DRIVE ON."



Photo credit: Jonathan Bainbrider/Reuters

And if you can put those two things together, then you're on the right track, and just drive on.

Powell, the good soldier with humble beginnings in Harlem, the son of Jamaican immigrants, took that philosophy and ran with it, from early postings in the segregated South, through several heroic and decorated tours in Vietnam, and straight through to the corridors of power in the White House West Wing and the Pentagon. During these postings, he learned how to play the political game (which included helping to initially cover up the My Lai massacre in March 1968, which occurred in his unit but well before he arrived in July of that year) under very powerful men, including Budget Director and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who would prove instrumental to his rise. In his varied roles, he acted as facilitator to his superiors' whims, carrying out their

sometimes-questionable orders to a T. One of those orders included the transfer of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles from Israel to Iran—the basis of the Iran-Contra scandal. Powell not only managed to escape indictment, he was promoted, first to President Ronald Reagan's national security advisor and then to chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff by President George H.W. Bush.

Somehow, he became known as "the reluctant warrior," despite time and again spearheading the efforts to go to war: Panama in 1989, Desert Storm in 1990-91, and finally the war that brought him his greatest notoriety, President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003. A justification for carrying out that invasion was evidence that Saddam Hussein was concealing weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—evidence presented by Secretary of State Powell himself before the United

Nations that was later proven to be completely false. The general's reputation took a severe body blow after that fiasco, and he resigned before Bush was sworn into a second term in 2005, ceding the secretary of state position to Condoleezza Rice. The soldier's soldier had at last played out his string.

However, it was not quite over for him yet. Powell still held enough sway to help elect his preferred candidate, Barack Obama, to the presidency in 2008 and re-elect him in 2012. It seems that the man who perfected serving others found the limits to obeisance.

Was Colin Powell a good man? Yes, I believe he was. But like many men in the high-stakes military and political worlds, he was also ambitious, not necessarily for the ultimate seat of power, but for positions close enough to it to be a key player. Like Icarus, he suffered when he flew too close to the sun.

One Man's Journey to Save the Human Soul

By Stephen G. Hall, Ph.D.

The December death at age 90 of Desmond Tutu, often referred to as the moral conscience of South Africa, sent shockwaves of grief throughout the world. Tutu was one of history's foremost activists and theologians, and his firm stand against systems of oppression and belief in the indelible rights of all human beings made him a larger-than-life figure. He seamlessly merged his theological beliefs with a desire to improve human conditions, and in doing so, he left an indelible mark on his native South Africa and on the human community.

Tutu began his career as a teacher, but he eventually heeded the call to the ministry and was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1961. After additional theological study at King's College and teaching and administrative stints in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, he eventually became bishop of Lesotho. Along the way, he consumed himself with the cause of anti-apartheid in South Africa; his activism would make him a legend.

Apartheid (which literally means apartness) was a system of legalized segregation used by the minority Afrikaner population (descendants of Dutch Boer settlers) against the majority black population beginning in 1948. It mandated strict segregation of and marginalization of black populations in South Africa. It also included a series of

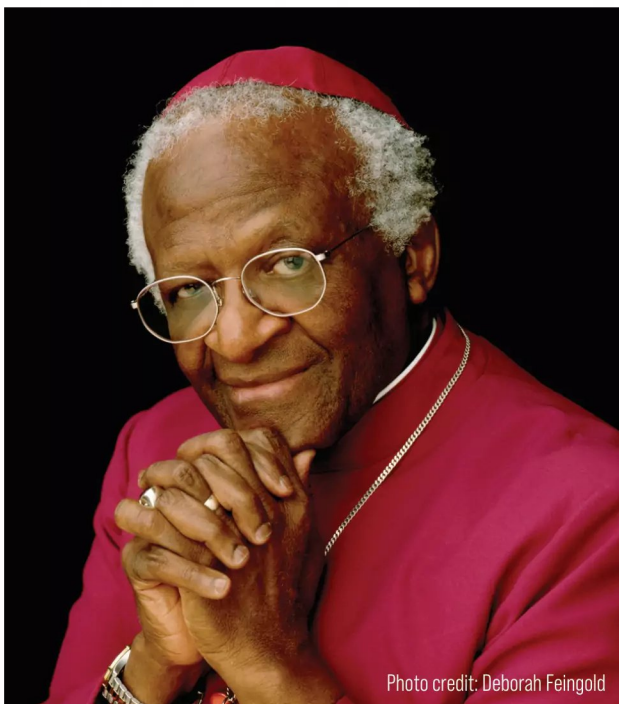


Photo credit: Deborah Feingold

draconian laws meant to regulate every facet of life in South Africa.

While bishop of Lesotho, Tutu became general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). In this role, he solidified his opposition to the apartheid state. He favored nonviolent action and foreign economic pressure, known as divestment, to challenge the regime. One of the few opposition leaders who managed to avoid imprisonment, Tutu took an aggressive stance, nonetheless. While he favored nonviolent methods to overthrow the system, he understood the factors that led people to utilize violent tactics. When Tutu testified on behalf of a captured cell of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), he condemned violence but

understood why black South Africans employed violent means in the struggle to overturn the regime. He also supported international economic boycotts of the South African government, which led to the confiscation of his passport. His advocacy led the SACC to officially adopt civil disobedience as a strategy in the struggle, and he repeatedly met with South African leaders urging them to voluntarily end the system.

Tutu condemned both the shortcomings of the apartheid state and the excesses of anti-apartheid activists.

This was particularly true as it related to the treatment of those believed to be complicit in aiding or abetting the apartheid state. In 1981, Tutu prevented a mob attending the funeral of civil rights lawyer Griffiths Mxenge from placing a tire around the neck of a suspected informant and setting it on fire, a practice known as necklacing. Tutu placed himself between the crowd and the suspected informant and demanded the crowd to cease and desist, after which he took the man away and drove him to safety.

Regardless of the prominence of his clerical position, Tutu was a stalwart defender of justice and human rights. His efforts to promote peace earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. After being installed as bishop

“IF YOU ARE NEUTRAL IN SITUATIONS OF INJUSTICE, YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE SIDE OF THE OPPRESSOR. IF AN ELEPHANT HAS ITS FOOT ON THE TAIL OF A MOUSE AND YOU SAY THAT YOU ARE NEUTRAL, THE MOUSE WILL NOT APPRECIATE YOUR NEUTRALITY.”

of Johannesburg in 1985, he used his first sermon to threaten the government. He said he would urge the international community to engage in economic sanctions against the country if it did not begin dismantling apartheid in 18 to 24 months. Subsequently, he called for boycotts, national strikes, and days of fasting and prayer. His continued work and appeals to the white community and for international pressure led to the eventual erosion of apartheid.

As archbishop of Cape Town from 1986 to 1994, Tutu continued his activism and initiated several important reforms in the Anglican church. In 1988, he was active in the case of the Sharpeville Six. This case arose from a protest and march in Sharpeville, which led to the death of Deputy Mayor Kuzwayo Jacob Dlamini. Six protestors were arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death. Tutu called for the protestors lives to be spared due to the hurried manner in which the trial was conducted and his opposition to capital punishment. Tutu enlisted international opinion and even lobbied South Africa's president, P.W. Botha. Tutu also championed the ordination of female priests and criticized the insistence of the church that gay priests remain celibate.

By 1990, internal and external pressure on South Africa and corporate divestment caused the government under President F.W. de Klerk to lift its ban on political parties such as the ANC. The announcement and the subsequent release of Nelson Mandela from prison led to numerous changes. Tutu joined the process to formally dismantle the apartheid state,

and he worked tirelessly to settle the differences between the ANC, Inkatha (a militant organization composed primarily of Zulus led by Mangosuthu Buthelezi), and the South African government. Other liberation groups included PAC and AZAPO. During the negotiations, Chris Hani, the leader of the South African Communist Party, was assassinated. Tutu preached at the funeral despite his objections to Hani's Marxist positions. In 1994, he participated in the planning for Mandela's presidential inauguration and supervised the religious components.

Tutu played a prominent role as chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Established in 1995, the TRC was responsible for addressing human rights abuses by the apartheid government and anti-apartheid movement during the apartheid period. Appointed to this post by Mandela, Tutu instituted a three-pronged approach to addressing the thorny questions of the moment: confession, forgiveness and restitution. The meetings, which began in 1996 and ended in 1998, were nationally televised as part of the reconciliation process and documented in a five-volume report. The TRC's work has become an international model for peaceful resolutions of conflict.

The remaining portion of Tutu's public life was devoted to a sustained activism on behalf of gay rights. He was a vocal critic of the Anglican church's position on homosexuality. He often compared the discrimination faced by homosexuals to that of black people and urged the church to accept and conduct same-sex marriages.

In addition to gay rights, Tutu also addressed the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. He opposed the government's lethargic response, comparing the AIDS crisis to apartheid's impact on African populations. Tutu worked to set an example for activism by speaking forcefully on the need for testing, getting tested himself, and criticizing the church—especially the Roman Catholic Church—for supporting conservative policies that discouraged the use of condoms.

Tutu courted controversy when he recognized the right of Israel to exist but simultaneously urged forgiveness for those who perpetrated the Holocaust. He also spoke out in support of a Palestinian state and the two-state solution and criticized Israel's aggressive policies toward the Palestinians. He took similar stances against Great Britain and the United States for the Iraq War. Tutu regularly criticized South African leaders and presidents Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, and he was just as ready to critique international leaders.

As an activist in the truest sense of the word, Tutu reflected his concern for humanity even in his funeral. His coffin was the cheapest wood available, and he chose to lie in state in St. George's Cathedral, known as the people's church. Rather than be cremated, his body underwent the process of *aquamation*, an environmentally friendly process using water to break down the body's components after death. True to a committed life, Tutu, even in death, proved that a great person can also be humble.

10 BEST WAYS TO CELEBRATE

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

By Lorraine Jones and Stephen G. Hall, Ph.D.

Officially recognized as a national observance by the U.S. government in 1976, Black History Month (BHM)—also known as African American History Month in the United States—is the annual remembrance of the people and events that have shaped the African experience since the beginning of recorded time. While BHM originated in and is mainly associated with the U.S., where it is celebrated in February, it is also observed in other countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom, where it is celebrated in October, and Canada.

In 1926, the historian Carter G. Woodson, who founded the groundbreaking *Journal of Negro History* and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, started Negro History Week. This event was observed the second week of February to maintain the black tradition of celebrating the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln on February 12 and Frederick Douglass on February 14. The belief, apparently, was that the week would become an annual event and help promote the study of Afrocentric history.

By the 1930s, Negro History Week was adapted to the curriculum of many schools with large attendance by black students, and black churches and newspapers were instrumental in spreading its popularity. The annual event was also an effective rebuttal to the “lost cause” belief then spreading in the American South under Jim Crow. Advanced in the novel and movie *Gone With the Wind*, this belief contended that slavery was essentially not that bad and that blacks were actually happier being slaves.

By the late 1960s, Negro History Week had become so popular—it had already been adopted as a holiday by many mayors—that black educators and the Black United Students at Kent State University proposed that it be expanded to a full month. The first Black History “Month” was observed at Kent State from January 2 through February 28, 1970. It has since been celebrated every year for the full month of February.

Though the reason for its inception, that of reversing historical misconceptions of blacks only as slaves and colonial subjects, is a noble one, not everyone (including many African Americans) is in favor of BHM. The main objections are that the month tends to oversimplify complex issues and events as superficial hero worship of a few individuals, outstanding though they may be, and that it tends to marginalize African Americans rather than considering them to be an integral part of American history.

In honor of BHM, *BAVUAL* offers its 10 Best Ways to Celebrate Black History Month, which we hope will become an annual list. Following is the list, in descending order:



Hold Parties and Festivals With Afrocentric Food and Music

Celebratory gatherings honoring African ancestry allow young African Americans to foster a three-dimensional sense of their heritage while surrounded by family and community.

It is crucial to understand and honor the history behind black music because it serves as the foundation for the majority of modern American music and culture. The earliest form of African American musical expression is spirituals such as Christian psalms and hymns. These oral traditions often outlined the deprivation of slavery. When the blues was developed in the South in the 1860s, it redefined the cultural and social lives of African Americans. The blues served as the foundation of contemporary American music in the late 1940s.

When soul music originated in the 1950s and early 1960s, the word “soul” grew to become synonymous with every aspect of black culture including food. This type of historic Afrocentric cuisine originated during American slavery in the South. These recipes evolved from the leftover or undesirable cuts of meat given to slaves by their masters into the classic chicken, pork, cornbread, kale, cabbage and other dishes known as soul food.

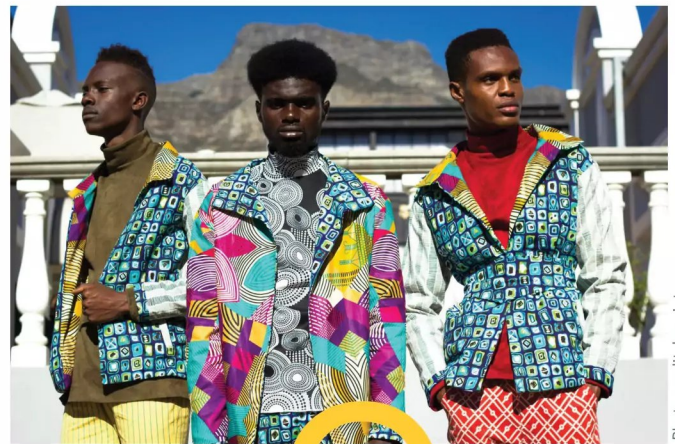


Photo credit: Imprint

Wear African Clothing

African garments are a classic reference point in current art and fashion. Various tribes throughout Africa wear traditional clothing during various ceremonial events and to indicate their spirituality, status, personal interests, etc., with each garment revealing a unique story or meaning behind it. Known for its intricate patterns and vibrant colors, African clothing is more than a mere trend.



One of the most popular forms of African clothing is the dashiki, which originated in West Africa and emerged in the U.S. fashion world in the late 1960s. Dashiki derives from the Yoruba word *dashiki*, referring to the comfortable and loose-fitting pullover worn during intense heat. A dashiki is a common form of clothing, typically black, red, white and green, that hangs over the waist. This symbol of Afrocentricity was worn during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. as a display of pride for African heritage and ancestry and to counter the mainstream Western fashion and racist cultural norms.

“I DON’T WANT A BLACK HISTORY MONTH. BLACK HISTORY IS AMERICAN HISTORY.”

– MORGAN FREEMAN, ACTOR



Visit Libraries and Museums

African American museums and libraries provide detailed and interactive compelling narratives that enhance one's understanding of grim aspects of our past. The Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Ala., for example, offers an immersive experience of this dark history. This landmark is located near one of the most prominent slave auction sites in the U.S. during the 19th century—the spot where enslaved black people were forced into labor through violence and intimidation.

At the Legacy Museum, visitors can also observe the transition from enslavement to mass incarceration. The voices of blacks who were wrongly convicted and unfairly sentenced because of flaws in the U.S. judicial system are featured and include the perspectives of those who were convicted while struggling with mental illness and minors who were tried as adults. They also show the inhumane treatment of blacks in the U.S. prison system and expose how the so-called “rule of law” today is often simply a continuation of the historical violence toward blacks in the U.S.



Hold Teach-Ins in Schools, Religious Establishments and Community Centers

Teach-ins were first established at the University of Michigan in 1965 in response to the Vietnam War. Since that academic form of activism, teach-ins have expanded across various issues such as ending war, racial injustice and gun violence with calls to action. During these political conversations, typically between students and faculty, members of academia share their collective knowledge and call attention to issues with the intent of creating legislative change. In the 1960s, teach-ins were often used to galvanize communities to join the fight for civil rights. With an emphasis on student and community involvement, modern teach-ins can help highlight relevant issues concerning the black community.



“IF A RACE HAS NO HISTORY, IT HAS NO WORTHWHILE TRADITION, IT BECOMES A NEGLIGIBLE FACTOR IN THE THOUGHT OF THE WORLD, AND IT STANDS IN DANGER OF BEING EXTERMINATED.”

—CARTER G. WOODSON



Photo credit: Erin Clark/Boston Globe



Credit: WGBH

Visit a Stop Along the Underground Railroad

As many of us learned in primary school, the Underground Railroad was used in the 18th and 19th centuries to assist Africans held in bondage to escape from the chains of slavery. This hidden network of safe houses gave white sympathizers, free blacks, Native Americans, and escaped enslaved people living in free areas an opportunity to help enslaved blacks gain their freedom. Although every escape from slavery wasn't successful, these trails exposed the horrors of bondage and proved that blacks could assemble and plan independently.

Many people may not know that you can follow the stops that numerous slaves took on their journey to freedom. One significant link in this

chain of support is in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. This area contains landmarks such as the Harriet Tubman Memorial Statue; the Newtown Theatre, the oldest continually operating movie theater in America; the Bensalem African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, one of the oldest African American churches; and many other significant stops on the Underground Railroad.

Get Involved With a Black Cause

Participating in an effort for equity will not only strengthen your sense of community but will give you a chance to experience what our ancestors felt during the civil rights protests of the 1950s and 1960s. Get involved in global and local movements such as the efforts to reallocate police funding, forbid officers to use chokeholds, and eliminate racially ignorant propaganda such as Confederate statues and branding such as Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben's labels. Other possibilities include donating to an organization or movement that funds community programs for black youth, supporting political campaigns, or helping fight legal battles such as paying the bail for arrested protestors. Whites can also be anti-racist and an ally of blacks by initiating tough and uncomfortable conversations about race to create change on a personal level.



Donate to and Consider Attending a Historically Black College/University (HBCU)

Supporting an HBCU helps push for a more equitable future for the U.S. According to a Gallup-Purdue poll, attending such an institution enables many black students to attain a higher education in an environment in which they feel comfortable and supported, making them more likely to succeed after graduation than their black peers who attended a predominately white university. HBCUs provide a valuable education and nurturing environment for many first-generation students or students who come from low-income families who would benefit the most from acquiring a degree. About 80 percent of the students who attend HBCUs receive federal loans. By donating to an HBCU, you would be helping decrease the racial wealth gap and address the unemployment crisis in the U.S.



Patronize a Black-Owned Business

Supporting black businesses not only helps the economy but shows allyship and directly supports blacks by advancing their means of livelihood. This also helps to narrow the racial wealth gap in this country. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income for black Americans is \$45,000, almost 41 percent less than their white counterparts. Black-owned businesses were also hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 40 percent of them closing since the pandemic began, according to a University of California study. Because only 31 percent of African American businesses receive the funds they apply for, this hit makes it even harder for this community to flourish. Patronizing these companies helps give them a fighting chance.





Get a Health Checkup

Systemic disadvantages and racial disparities in U.S. healthcare contribute to poor health and a rise in preventable disease in the black community. Black men have statistically reported inferior health and have a lower engagement rate with medical professionals and health screenings than white men. African Americans need to start prioritizing their own health. Black people are about 31 percent more likely to die from heart disease, 43 percent

more likely to be killed by a stroke, and 23 percent more likely to die from cancer than other races. These ailments can often be prevented or caught early to decrease their severity by routine checkups and preventive screenings.

Make Some History

Be an advocate for your community. Don't wait until February to further your knowledge of African heritage. Instead, promote the study year-round of achievements by people of African descent.

Notice injustices, underrepresentation or inequity wherever it exists and go after it. Change needs to be fought for every day, so amplify the voices and messages of those around you for a more desirable tomorrow.

Empower members of the black community. Support and learn from young activists such as Amanda Gorman, a 23-year-old American poet who became the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history last January. Gorman concentrates on the African diaspora, oppression, marginalization, race and gender equality in her poetry.

We are living black history every day. It's in the hands of today's activists to keep pushing for concrete change and be the new history makers.



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REPARATIONS

THE PROS AND CONS



Should black Americans be compensated for slavery and property seized after slavery ended?

The American Civil War ended 156 years ago, but the after-effects of slavery and segregation linger in the American psyche. Many of them—such as the loss of income and assets and less political power for blacks—are quantifiable; however, some of them—such as social and cultural disrespect—are more subtle. It is difficult, if not impossible, to put a price tag on the latter.

“IT’S GETTING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, YOU AMONG THEM, TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION THAT IF THIS EXPERIMENT IS GOING TO WORK, NONE OF US, NONE OF US, CAN EXPECT ANY DIFFERENT TREATMENT THAN ANYBODY ELSE.”
—WARD CONNERLY

The facts are plain for all to see:

The issue of reparations began in 1619, with the arrival of the first Africans in America, who were kidnapped and stored in the cargo holds of ships on the African coast and transported to the English colony in Virginia. Originally bartered as indentured servants by privateers in exchange for food, these early Africans over time were further reduced to outright enslavement, shorn of any connection to Mother Africa—of their language, religion, family, genealogy and, most importantly, their spirit. Considered cattle and denied possessions of any kind, often brutally beaten, constantly humiliated, hunted down if they ran away and mercilessly punished or lynched if caught, the African population numbered 4.4 million (of which only 488,000 were considered free)—14 percent of the overall population—at the start of the Civil War in 1861.

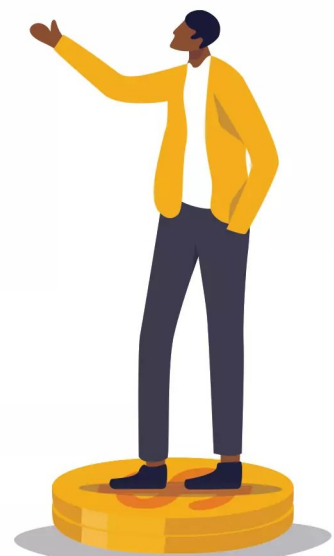
After President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, freeing all slaves where the practice existed (some blacks were not informed until June 19, 1865), and after the Union victory in 1865, the former states of the Confederacy were placed under a period of Reconstruction, which lasted until 1877. During this period, slavery was formally abolished under the 14th Amendment and blacks were granted full citizenship rights, including the right to vote, hold office and own property, which many

took advantage of. Others, however, were still confined to being sharecroppers, or tenant farmers, on land owned by their former slave masters, who charged them rent to farm it—a sort of perpetuation of slavery by other means. The period of terrorism by Night Riders, which morphed into the Ku Klux Klan, was exacerbated with the ending of Reconstruction and the U.S Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which began a 58-year period of apartheid against blacks. Many blacks, especially in the South, were stripped of

their political power, denied the right to vote, had their property seized, often through deadly violence, and were reduced to second-class citizenship. The racist doctrine of “separate but equal,” which would begin to crumble with the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the spark for the modern Civil Rights Movement, actually meant inferior treatment everywhere—in education, housing, jobs, and even access to public facilities.

Why Reparations?

Which brings us to 2022. The significant gains of African Americans over the past 68 years—desegregated schools and public facilities, fairer housing, increased employment opportunity, a reduction in poverty and a growing middle class, voting rights and political influence—have been hard-won through sometimes deadly



	WHITE	BLACK
TYPICAL FAMILY NET WORTH (2016)	\$171,000	\$17,150 [1]
MEDIAN ANNUAL INCOME	\$68,000	\$41,500 [2]
HOME OWNERSHIP	73.3%	42.1% [3]
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE	89%	80% [4]
COLLEGE GRADUATION RATE (6-YEAR)	69.6%	51.5% [5]
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (3 RD QUARTER 2021)	4.6%	8.4% [6]
MORTALITY PER 100,000 POPULATION	736.8	870.7 [7]

SOURCES: (1) USA TODAY, 10/23/20; (2) Grow.Acorns.com; (3) USAFacts.org; (4) nces.ed.gov; (5) edtrust.org; (6) bls.gov; (7) kff.org

struggles. Despite the impressive gains, there remains great economic and social inequality between blacks and whites. The above well-researched statistics tell the story.

Except in limited school and work environments, blacks and whites seldom mix socially. Blacks are still banned from some of the most elite private clubs. Access to capital needed for business formation is limited to nil. Property seized by whites through force, such as during the infamous destruction of Tulsa, Oklahoma's Black Wall Street and the massacre of its black citizens in 1921, has seldom been returned. Daily indignities, especially in the criminal justice system, are incessant. The poverty rate is 9 percent for whites and a staggering 21.2 percent for blacks.

Agreement on the solution is far from unanimous

Given these facts, what should be done about it? Opinions vary. Some guilt-ridden whites have taken to Venmoing actual cash payments to destitute black families. In a celebrated recent incident, the family of a black couple whose beachfront

property was illicitly seized by Los Angeles County in 1924, now said to be worth millions, is set to have the property returned to them. Robert Johnson, the billionaire founder of Black Entertainment Television, has his own intriguing solution (see page 7, "The Drift" in MY TAKE).

The consensus is building for cash compensation for slavery and Jim Crow, similar to that given to the Japanese as recompense for their internment in camps during World War II; therein lies the problem. Some are for compensation, others against, with prominent advocates on each side. Among those who want payment: the aforementioned Johnson, Beto O'Rourke, Marianne Williamson and Chuck Collins. Those against include mainly black conservatives such as Shelby Steele, Armstrong Williams, Thomas Sowell and Condoleezza Rice, but also former Democratic President Barack Obama. Two prominent voices have emerged from both sides of the reparations coin: writer Ta-Nehisi Coates (pro) and businessman and anti-affirmative action activist Ward Connerly (anti). We present their arguments here.



The following is a transcript of Coates' testimony at a U.S. congressional hearing on reparations in 2019:

Yesterday, when asked about reparations, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell offered a familiar reply: America should not be held liable for something that happened 150 years ago, since none of us currently alive are responsible.

“THE MATTER OF REPARATIONS IS ONE OF MAKING AMENDS.”

—TA-NEHISI COATES

This rebuttal proffers a strange theory of governance—that American accounts are somehow bound by the lifetime of its generations. But well into this century, the United States was still paying out pensions to the heirs of Civil War soldiers. We honor treaties that date back some 200 years, despite no one being alive who signed those treaties.

Many of us would love to be taxed for the things we are solely and individually responsible for. But we are American citizens, and thus bound to a collective enterprise that extends beyond our individual and personal reach. It would seem ridiculous to dispute invocations of the Founders, or the Greatest Generation, on the basis of a lack of membership in either group. We recognize our lineage as a generational trust, as inheritance, and the real dilemma posed by reparations is just that: a dilemma of inheritance. It is impossible to imagine America without the inheritance of slavery.

As historian Ed Baptist has written, enslavement “shaped every crucial aspect of the economy and politics” of America, so that by 1836 more than \$600 million, almost half of the economic activity in the United States, derived directly or indirectly from the cotton produced by the million-odd slaves. By the time the enslaved were emancipated, they comprised the largest single asset in America: three billion in 1860 dollars, more than all the other assets in the country combined.

The method of cultivating this asset was neither gentle cajoling nor persuasion, but torture, rape and child trafficking. Enslavement

reigned for 250 years on these shores. When it ended, this country could have extended its hallowed principles—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—to all, regardless of color. But America had other principles in mind. And so, for a century after the Civil War, black people were subjected to a relentless campaign of terror, a campaign that extended well into the lifetime of Majority Leader McConnell.

It is tempting to divorce this modern campaign of terror, of plunder, from enslavement, but the logic of enslavement, of white supremacy, respects no such borders and the guard of bondage was lustful and begat many heirs. Coup d'états and convict leasing. Vagrancy laws and debt peonage. Redlining and racist GI bills. Poll taxes and state-sponsored terrorism.

We grant that Mr. McConnell was not alive for Appomattox. But he was alive for the electrocution of George Stinney. He was alive for the blinding of Isaac Woodard. He was alive to witness kleptocracy in his native Alabama and a regime premised on electoral theft. Majority Leader McConnell cited civil-rights legislation yesterday, as well he should, because he was alive to witness the harassment, jailing, and betrayal of those

responsible for that legislation by a government sworn to protect them. He was alive for the redlining of Chicago and the looting of black homeowners of some \$4 billion. Victims of that plunder are very much alive today. I am sure they'd love a word with the majority leader.

What they know, what this committee must know, is that while emancipation deadbolted the door against the bandits of America, Jim Crow wedged the windows wide open. And that is the thing about Senator McConnell's “something”: It was 150 years ago. And it was right now.

The typical black family in this country has one-tenth the wealth of the typical white family. Black women die in childbirth at four times the rate of white women. And there is, of course, the shame of this land of the free boasting the largest prison population on the planet, of which the descendants of the enslaved make up the largest share.

The matter of reparations is one of making amends and direct redress, but it is also a question of citizenship. In HR-40, this body has a chance to both make good on its 2009 apology for enslavement and reject fair-weather patriotism—to say that a nation is both its credits and debits. That if Thomas Jefferson matters, so does Sally Hemings. That if D-Day matters, so does Black Wall Street. That if Valley Forge matters, so does Fort Pillow. Because the question really is not whether we'll be tied to the somethings of our past, but whether we are courageous enough to be tied to the whole of them. Thank you.

Continued on page 84



GHANA

Africa's Gateway

By Steve Woodhouse

What was once a major port for the horrors of African enslavement has now become a destination for many black Americans who seek to reconnect with their roots.

Per a September 2021 *CBS Mornings* report, at least 5,000 African Americans have immigrated to the Republic of Ghana. This move was spurred in 2019 at the invitation of President Akufo-Addo, who encouraged African Americans who felt they did not belong in the United States to consider the move. Racial tensions have continued in America for generations. The 2020s have been no different, and the outrage stemming from the death of George Floyd made more black Americans give Ghana another look.



Famous Faces From Ghana



Van Vicker

Joseph van Vicker, better known as Van Vicker, is a 44-year-old native of Ghana's capital, Accra.

Vicker's childhood was defined by the loss of his father at the age of 6. His mother raised him in various locations all around the world. To this day, she is still his hero.

His career in the public spotlight began in radio in 1999. From there, he moved on to television and, eventually, the movies.

Today, he is one of Ghana's most well-known actors, humanitarians and executives. He has been acting since 2004 and has routinely been recognized for his craft through award nominations and wins. Outside of the movie business, he has worked with Our Voice Matters International Peace Coalition and the Van Vicker Foundation. Business ventures also include film production house Sky + Orange Productions and the Van Vicker Training facility.



Boris Kodjoe

Boris Kodjoe is the son of Ghanaian physician Eric Kodjoe, who was married to German psychologist Ursula. Ursula is of partial Jewish descent, and Boris is said to have ties to a Holocaust victim and survivor.

Kodjoe was born in Vienna, Austria, and came to America to attend Virginia Commonwealth University on a tennis scholarship. He was a standout on the collegiate tennis team in both singles and doubles competition, but a back injury permanently sidelined him from the game. The good looks with which he was gifted helped him find his true calling.

TLC's 1995 music video for *Red Light Special* was just the beginning for him. It was only seven years later that Kodjoe was named one of *People* magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People." With several film and television appearances to his credit, Kodjoe is currently shooting a movie based on O.J. Simpson and Nicole Brown Simpson, in which he is cast as O.J.



Idris Elba

Idris Elba is one of the most bankable actors working today. His most recent film, *The Suicide Squad*, was not his first foray into comic-book films, as he had already starred as Heimdall in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and made appearances in *The Losers* and *Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance*.

The Suicide Squad was the first comic-book film in which he was the featured lead among an impressive ensemble cast, but he had long before established his acting chops in television shows such as *Luther* and *The Wire* and with stellar big-screen performances in various genres.

Elba was born to a Ghanaian mother, Eve, and a Sierra Leonean father, Winston, in London, England. Today, his home country considers him one of the most influential people of African descent in the U.K.

Ghana's Past: Colonialism, the Slave Trade and Independence

Ghana was blessed with numerous natural gifts, not the least of which was its gold. Several kingdoms had ruled over sections of the country since the earliest known state of Bono, founded in the 12th century.

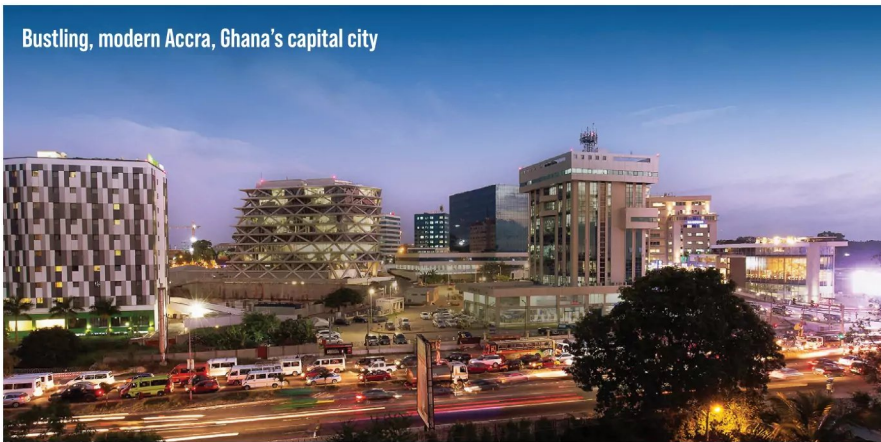
In the 1400s, white Europeans moved into the area, which became known as the Gold Coast because it was a source of gold for trade.

The Europeans built castles to protect their trade interests among Ghana's lush forests and beautiful beaches, and many of those castles still stand today.

When the interest of the Europeans turned to the slave trade, the Gold Coast's location made it a convenient primary stop in the triangle trade among Europe, North America and Africa.

People of the continent were enslaved through various means—tribal wars, kidnapping, familial sale—and transported to the Gold Coast to be shipped and sold, primarily in the Americas and the West Indies. In the 17th century, the slave trade became the most popular use of the Gold Coast. Historians estimate that around 10 million slaves passed through its ports from the late 1400s through the 1800s.

Britain formally colonized parts of the Gold Coast by 1874. Conflicts between the imperialist settlers and natives of the area from the tribe of Akan went on for years. In these wars—known as the Anglo-Ashanti Wars, named after the Ashanti Kingdom—the Akan were not deterred by losses and kept coming back for 100 years. (See page 42.) Their resilience paid off, and the country gained its independence in 1957.



Bustling, modern Accra, Ghana's capital city



Information technology is a mainstay of modern education.



Modern estates coexist with traditional thatched huts.



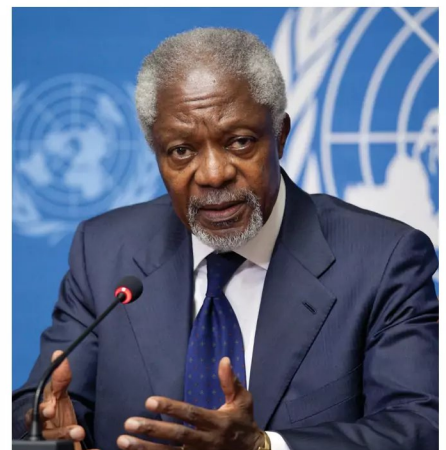
Kente, the traditional or natural cloth of Ghana



Fishing baskets along the Ghanaian coast



The beauty of the Ghanaian countryside



Ghanaian diplomat Kofi Annan was UN secretary-general (1997-2006).

Kwame Nkrumah Reshapes Africa



Kwame Nkrumah was always going to be a revolutionary. His ambition and education left him no other choice.

A son of a polygamist who had the respect of his peers through his work as a goldsmith, Nkrumah was the only child of his mother, Elizabeth Nyanibah, who worked as a fish trader.

She raised Nkrumah without his father in a village surrounded by extended family. Nkrumah

attended Catholic school and was baptized in the faith. Leaders in the school saw something special about him and groomed him to become an educator and a unifying force among the tribes of Africa.

Nkrumah expanded his horizons by spending a decade in the United States, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Lincoln University and other schools. He spent his free time in Harlem. Spending time on these streets allowed him to further his education in a different way, listening to orators discuss the plight of black people.

His circle expanded to include friends who taught him about Marxism. At the conclusion of World War II, Nkrumah moved to London to pursue a Ph.D. in anthropology. He was given a recommendation from a Trinidadian who stated that Nkrumah was determined to throw Europeans out of Africa.

In the face, and home, of British imperialism, he fought for the decolonization and independence of Africa. He returned home to the Gold Coast in 1947 to form a Union of African Socialist Republics.

His fight continued through forming the Convention People's Party in 1949, which garnered him strong political support from common Gold Coast people. Following years of struggle in the late 1940s and 1950s, including nonviolent positive action, peaceful protests, strikes, rioting, looting, violence, and a period in which Nkrumah was imprisoned by the British, the people successfully ended British colonialism in 1957. Nkrumah was the new country's first prime minister and was later elected its first president when it became a republic in 1960.

Nkrumah's ideals were admired by the Soviet Union, which awarded him the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962. His administrations had nationalist and socialist elements, and he was a strong proponent of Pan-Africanism. Unfortunately, he helped establish one-party rule in Ghana through a constitutional amendment that also named him president for life. He was ousted by a coup in 1966 while he was out of the country and spent the rest of his days in Guinea, where he was honorably referred to as that country's "co-president."



Black Stars, Ghana's national football (soccer) team

The country officially renamed itself Ghana after a region in the northwest territory, and its successful removal of the shackles of British rule inspired many other African nations to follow suit.

Kwame Nkrumah (see sidebar at left) became prime minister in 1957. Following Ghana's transition to a republic, he was elected president in 1960. Unfortunately, Nkrumah's reign was the precursor of what was to come for generations. A leader was selected, only to be removed in a military coup a relatively short time later. While Nkrumah was out of the country in 1966, a coup by the military and police ousted him from power.

Flight Lt. Jerry Rawlings led one of these coups in 1979 and briefly handed over power to Hilla Limann—only to lead another coup to oust Limann due to economic problems.

In 1983, Rawlings instituted free-market policies, privatized several state enterprises, dropped price controls, and abolished subsidies. These policies were said to have devalued the currency, but he managed to stay in power. He was elected president after the people of Ghana approved a new constitution in 1992.

Tribal warfare, flooding, inconsistent leadership, and other issues continued to plague Ghana. Trust in the government remained unsteady as President Akufo-Addo was re-elected in December 2020, only to have his opponent and former president John Mahama accuse him of election fraud.



Great surfing at Busua Beach in the Western Region

Modern Improvements and Shortcomings

Today's Ghana has seen a measure of prosperity, as residents have been able to inch up in worldwide wealth rankings. The country remains poor, however, with women expected to have at least 6 percent lower earning potential than men.

Under its constitution, Ghana enjoys a free press along with state-run media. Radio is slowly giving way to being the most popular medium for information to television as more homes are able to afford devices.

Education has been key to Ghana's growing success, as 95 percent of children are enrolled in school. This percentage places Ghana near the crown of African countries in the same statistic.

Civil rights remain a concern in Ghana, as members of the LGBTQ+ community continue to experience discrimination and violence. Various sectors of the government have reached out to this community to offer protection and understanding, but discrimination against



Jubilee Oilfield in the South Atlantic Ocean. Ghana has the 5th largest petroleum reserves in Africa and the 21st-25th largest in the world.



Ghanaian fashion is as diverse as its people.



The Ashanti Queen Mother Who Fought British Colonialism

When one thinks of freedom fighters, men usually come to mind, be it fiction (Luke Skywalker of the Star Wars Saga) or real-life (Spartacus). Seldom do we associate women with militancy and conflict. However, Ghanaian history boasts one such woman, known as the queen mother—Nana Yaa Asantewaa.

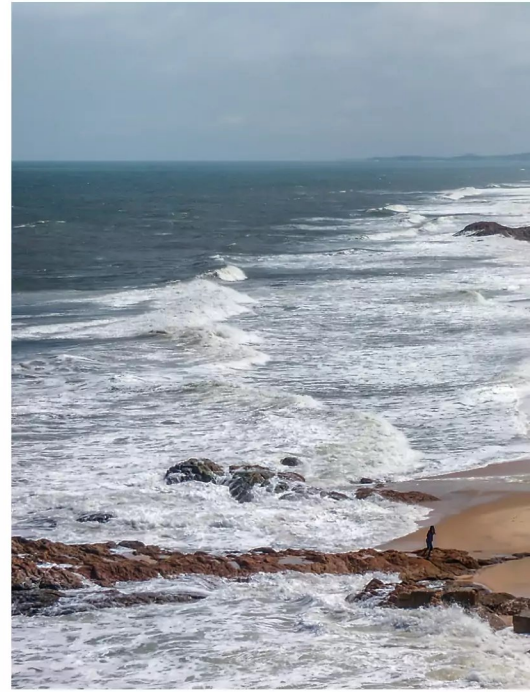
Little is known of this brave and determined woman; her birth is placed sometime between the 1840s and 1860s in the Ashanti Confederacy of present-day Ghana. We know that she was a skilled farmer before being chosen queen mother by her elder brother, Nana Akwasi Afrane Okpase, who was ruler at the time. In this role, the queen mother, occupant of the second-highest position within the Ashanti Kingdom, was responsible for advising the king and acting as Gatekeeper of the “Golden Stool,” an emblem of the Ashanti Kingdom, cultural system and power.

The queen mother earned her eternal place in history with one act: violent opposition to British expansionism in her country. At the end of the 19th century, Great Britain was one of the Western European powers that had carved up the continent of Africa for economic exploitation. The British overstepped their bounds, however, when they attempted to construct a Gold Coast colony in the Ashanti Kingdom and faced fierce opposition from the Ashanti people. As retaliation, the British exiled the Ashanti king—Asantehene Prempeh I—and the queen mother’s grandson, also a powerful leader, to the Seychelles in 1896 in order to acquire the Golden Stool.

While other tribal leaders dawdled, the queen mother took action. As commander of the Ashanti army, she stood her ground and rallied the troops, leading them into battle in what became known as the Yaa Asantewaa War of Independence (or the War of the Golden Stool), which began on March 28, 1900.

This fifth and final of the Ashanti wars did not end well. Both sides took on massive casualties—1,000 for the British and their African allies and 2,000 for the Ashanti—but the outcome was preordained in the face of superior British force.

The queen mother displayed uncommon strength and turned traditional gender roles on their head. Though she died in exile in the Seychelles in 1921, her spirit has endured as a symbol of strength and resistance for Ghanaians and women throughout the world, regardless of color. Her memory endures with a museum in her honor in the Ejisu-Juaben District of Ghana and with an achievement award titled the “Nana Yaa Asantewaa Awards,” which honors women who uphold the values and leadership of Asantewaa.



those who practice same-sex relationships or appear to be gender fluid remains codified.

For those who may not fear or encounter discrimination from the government, threats can come from family members who fear they may be shamed by association. Islam is the predominant religion in the Northern part of the country, while most in the South identify as Christians. Neither of these religions support the LGBTQ+ lifestyle.

Other challenges remain in Ghana, including accusations of witchcraft being levied against old women in the country and difficulty with illegal narcotics coming in from Latin America. Still, there is hope for the nation due to its resources.

Precious metals and oil continue to contribute significantly to the economy, and strong cacao crops, tourism and technological manufacturing provide jobs for many. It is a burgeoning first-world country, with its own space program, universal healthcare and cybernetic infrastructure.



Tourism and recreational opportunities await those interested in discovering this West African gem. Ghanaian cooks have perfected various soups, seafood and other delicacies.

Ghana's contributions to culture, music, fashion and film have existed for decades and have only become more significant with each passing year. One of the earliest forms of literature to come out of Africa was *Voices of Ghana* in the 1950s.

Progressing in all of these areas is not enough for Ghana, as the people have made it a goal to be the hub of West Africa and sustainability.

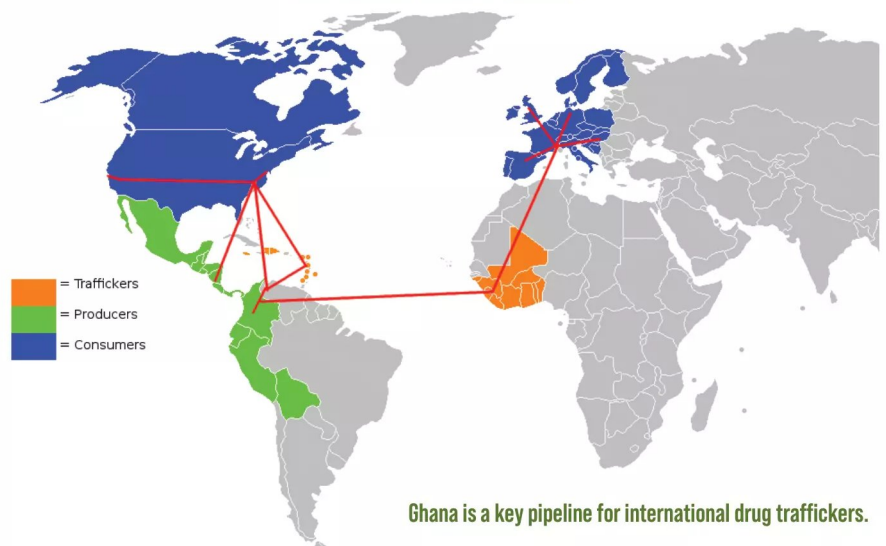
Ghana's future looks quite bright and may be enhanced with the immigration of black Americans looking for a fresh start.



Traditional chiefs in Ghana



Market in Accra, Ghana's capital city



Ghana is a key pipeline for international drug traffickers.



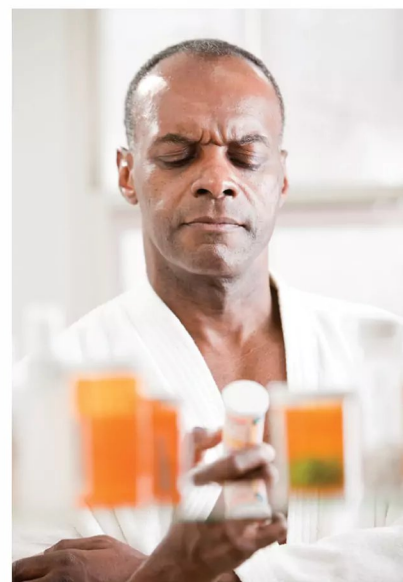
BLACKS' FEAR OF MEDICINE

Some Uncomfortable Truths About Healthcare in America

By Lorraine Jones

When the COVID-19 vaccines began to be released and slowly distributed to the public, many Americans felt a wave of relief and security knowing we finally had a way to combat such a deadly virus that has plagued the world. But many members of the African American community remained apprehensive.

Medical mistrust among the black community has lingered for over a century, causing late diagnoses, untold suffering, and often-avoidable deaths. These feelings are so potent because of numerous cases of negligence, systemic racism and overall prejudice toward black people.





Although medical advancements have increased people's quality of life and answered many questions about the human body, there is controversy about whether the ends justify the means when it comes to medical experiments and procedures. There is a long history of medical exploitation of blacks through force, coercion and deception to achieve medical ends without their consent. African Americans have been used as guinea pigs for many innovations, and they have seen institutional racism in medicine in an abundance of documented medical procedures for more than 150 years, including horrid experiments and testing on enslaved people, sometimes without pain relief. This use (or rather abuse) of African



The infamous Tuskegee experiment began to make blacks suspicious of medicine.

Photo credit: National Archives

Americans did not stop with the end of slavery, however. An infamous medical study that began in the 1930s, the Tuskegee experiment, left many African Americans uneasy and skeptical about medical professionals.

An Ethically Unjustified Experiment

In 1932, the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) executed the Tuskegee experiment in pursuit of finding a cure for syphilis, a contagious venereal disease. Lured by the promise of free medical services such as transportation to and from the hospital, free lunch, and free medical treatment for ailments other than syphilis, 600 black men volunteered to participate in the project, which aimed to examine the progression of the disease.

For 40 years, these men remained untreated for research purposes. During this experiment, approximately 200 black men were left to the disease without treatment, even after penicillin was discovered as a cure. Many experienced severe health problems such as blindness and permanent mental impairment. Some even died. In addition, some of their spouses developed the disease and passed it on to their babies.

In 1972, the final report of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study Ad Hoc Advisory Panel concluded that the study was “ethically unjustified,” noting that the “results [were] disproportionately meager compared with known risks to human subjects involved.” The stain of the Tuskegee experiment displayed a blatant lack of concern for the well-being of these black men and their families.

HeLa Cells: Taken Without Consent or Compensation

Another investigation of medical procedures performed on a young black woman in the 1950s revealed more unethical actions doctors carried out without the patient's permission. Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman and mother of five, fell terminally ill when she developed cervical cancer in 1951. During her stay in the colored ward at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, a sample was taken from Lacks' tumor and another from the healthy part of her cervix without her knowledge or consent.

It was then that her doctors discovered that Lacks' cells could reproduce indefinitely. These cells, which became known as HeLa cells, have helped researchers make numerous advancements in many fields, including the development of treatments and vaccines for diseases such as Parkinson's disease, AIDS, influenza, cancers, polio and COVID-19. According to *UN News*, Lacks' cells have been used in more than 75,000 studies. The profits made from those cells are incalculable.

The Lacks family remained unaware that their beloved mother's cells were being used around the world until nearly two decades later. In 1970, the Lacks children allowed doctors to draw blood under the impression they were being genetically tested for the same disease that killed their mother in 1951, but this was not the case. Samples were once again taken from the Lackses for further medical research without disclosing its purpose to the patients. Henrietta's children were left feeling exploited and violated.

As her HeLa cells lived on indefinitely, the memory of



Mississippi has practiced forced sterilization of black women for decades.

"We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population."

Margaret Sanger, 1939
(Planned Parenthood Founder)



Planned Parenthood's founder Margaret Sanger promoted eugenics.

Henrietta Lacks began to fade for many. For those blacks who knew or learned about her story, however, this event caused or increased their mistrust of the medical establishment for decades.

Reproductive Rights, Eugenics, Sterilization and Birth Control

In addition to countless experiments on African Americans, black women have consistently been stripped of their reproductive rights. This abuse dated as far back as the 19th century when James Marion Sims, who is referred to as "the father of modern gynecology," practiced many of his experimental surgeries on

enslaved black women without anesthetics.

Black women are also the most targeted race for forced sterilization in the 20th century. For many women, the invention of birth control was a liberating way to establish control of their lives and bodies, but for many African American women, it became yet another form of exploitation.

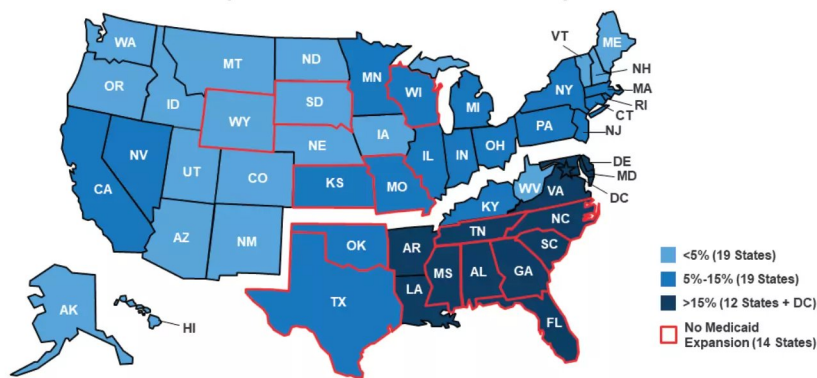
Civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer spoke out in 1964 about her experience with forced sterilization. Hamer was only 44 years old when she was involuntarily sterilized by a white doctor in 1961 after seeking medical care to have a noncancerous uterine tumor removed.

During the 20th century, rates of sterilization skyrocketed, particularly in North Carolina, and black women were among the most targeted. From the 1930s to the 1940s, the percentage of state-sterilized African American women was 23 percent. Between 1958 and 1960, the percentage rose to 59 percent, and then between 1964 and 1966, it jumped to 64 percent.

Racism and the belief in eugenics has perpetuated forced sterilization against women of color. *Eugenics*—the advocacy for or act of controlling breeding to bring about a higher-quality population—has been perpetuated throughout the years in the belief that specific practices can enhance the genetics of humans, with white and able-bodied traits considered the ideal standard for “good” genetics. Black women were specifically victimized to diminish their genes in the population by eliminating their ability to reproduce. Numerous black women were sterilized when admitted to healthcare facilities for other issues, unaware of the exploitation until much later. It was also common for these women to be coerced into exploitation through false information from a physician.

One of the most prominent leaders to adopt eugenics was Margaret Sanger, founder of the American Birth Control League, which would become Planned Parenthood. In her campaign for contraception, Sanger promoted “a better race.” She believed by using birth control that the “unfit will voluntarily eliminate their kind.” Eugenics sterilization took a toll on countless black women because of racism and xenophobia. In a letter written in 1939, Sanger told Dr. C.J. Gamble, “We do not want word to go out

Share of Total Nonelderly Population that is Black by State and Medicaid Expansion Status as of April 2020



Note: Includes nonelderly individuals 0-64 years of age and non-Hispanic Blacks.

Source: KFF analysis of 2018 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates and KFF, Status of State Action on the Medicaid Expansion Decision, as of April 2020. <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/state-activity-around-expanding-medicare-under-the-affordable-care-act/>

Getting adequate medical care for blacks largely depends on where they live.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

that we want to exterminate the Negro population, and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members.”

Racism in Childbirth

Black women can also feel the stark impact of institutional racism in childbirth. In the United States, African American women are three times more likely to die after giving birth than white women. Newborns born to black mothers died at twice the rate of babies born to mothers of the majority race. This is a pattern that holds true across education and socioeconomic statuses. One black woman at the highest level of achievement and social class, tennis star Serena Williams, might have even experienced medical negligence after the birth of her daughter Alexis Olympia in 2017. The tennis star faced nearly fatal pregnancy-related complications after her emergency C-section with her now 4-year-old. The new mother spoke out about her agonizing postpartum experience when hospital personnel didn’t act on her distress over experiencing a pulmonary

embolism, a blood clot lodged in her artery in the lung, a condition the star is highly susceptible to and that nearly killed her in 2011. One of Williams’ nurses allegedly dismissed her distress for her condition under the false assumption that her pain medication resulted in her confusion.

Many black women must endure such a fractured and inferior healthcare system. Racism threatens the lives of African American women and infants, but it is not merely racism but the biased racist system that allows such prejudice and the rates of often-preventable mortality. Black patients experience the dismissal of their complaints and symptoms, misdiagnoses, untreated pain based on assumptions and false stereotypes, and a lower likelihood of referrals for specialty care. Although we no longer have segregated hospitals, older members of the black community still remember the inferior treatment in those “colored” hospitals and see the similarities when doctors today continue to bring unconscious racial bias into their encounters with patients.

Inequities That Cause Harm

The United States healthcare system is beset with inequities that disproportionately affect the black community. African Americans are one of the most economically disadvantaged groups in the U.S., and therefore public health-insurance programs such as Medicaid are essential to their ability to access affordable healthcare. Still, several states, especially those in the South, have resisted Medicaid expansion, putting the health and lives of countless blacks at greater risk.

Barriers to economic opportunity, uneven access to healthcare, and food insecurity contribute to overall poor health among blacks. Food insecurity is present when a household or family lacks access to adequate nutritious food. This is often a result of a lack of funds to acquire healthy food, residing in an impoverished geographic area void of grocery stores with nutritious fresh foods, or lack of transportation. Residential areas with a scarcity of nutritious foods available are known as food deserts. The top 10 U.S. counties with the highest rates of food insecurity all have at least a 60 percent African American population.

Low-income neighborhoods have a greater prevalence of food sources that promote unhealthy habits such as fast food and liquor stores. In West Oakland, Calif., an area populated with 30,000 people who are primarily African American and Latino, there were 36 liquor and convenience stores but only one supermarket. Experts at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health have also found that predominantly black, low-income neighborhoods in Baltimore were eight times more

likely to have carry-out liquor stores than white or racially integrated neighborhoods.

Contrary to popular belief, the consumption of soul food is not the main source of poor health and disease in the black community. Fast food plays a major role in the diet of many minorities in low-income areas. Fast food and the processed and saturated food at convenience stores can cause health problems such as obesity, depression, digestive issues, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and even cancer. Along with a higher prevalence of diabetes, blacks often endure more obstacles to preventing, managing and treating this largely diet-related disease.

With such a high probability for these conditions and other risk factors, blacks are more than twice as likely to die from COVID-19 than whites. Still, their experiences with institutional healthcare inequity and systemic neglect and bias have led to their distrust of medical professionals and lower healthcare engagement. These lingering feelings of medical distrust have resulted in the neglect of 'their health, allowing their conditions to go untreated and intensify. Because of these negative experiences with the healthcare industry, despite being the community that is most vulnerable to the virus, only 42 percent of black Americans said they'd be willing to take a COVID-19 vaccine.

The Way Forward

For all of these reasons, even though blacks are disproportionately vulnerable to many harmful health risks and problems, they receive the most-inferior healthcare. This is partly due to their

understandable mistrust of the medical community, their lower economic status, bias and racial disparities in healthcare, their lack of political power, and a failure of education, all of which derive from a long legacy of racial discrimination. Of course, the problems that cause these inequities themselves point to the solutions. To solve these problems, the government, the medical community and others must take steps to build trust in the black community; address poverty and lack of access to healthcare for those with lower incomes through public policy and laws; end racial discrimination through legal consequences and education; and increase political influence among blacks and their allies.

Easier said than done, but it is indeed a matter of life and death.



Poor diet and nutrition, such as fast food, is a continuing health problem in black communities.

Photo credit: Finbarr O'Reilly/Reuters



Genetics and poor health choices have caused many blacks to suffer problems such as diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease and amputation.

Photo credit: Heidi deMarco/Kaiser Health News

Q&A: The Dope on COVID-19

Q: What Is COVID-19? Where Did It Come From?

A: COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. The source of the disease is not yet known, but experts have speculated that it began in 2019 with bats and was transmitted through another animal to humans at one of Wuhan, China's open-air "wet markets," which are similar to those found throughout Asia. At these markets, consumers can purchase fresh meat, fish and other animals that are killed in front of them. Such hotspots breed conditions that enable viruses from various animals to swap genes. The theory that COVID-19 was intentionally created by the Chinese in a lab as a biological weapon has not been proven and is considered the least likely explanation.



Q: Why Is It Considered a Pandemic?

A: COVID-19 was officially designated a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020 because of the sudden increase in cases spreading globally. As of this writing, more than 268 million people have been infected worldwide, resulting in more than 5.5 million deaths. The U.S. leads all countries with about 50 million infections and roughly 800,000 deaths—more than from all its wars combined, excluding the Civil War.

Q: Is It Lethal?

A: Although many of the people who develop the disease have mild to moderate symptoms, fully recovering without any extensive treatment, COVID-19 can be lethal. Anyone who is considered high risk (for example, the elderly and people with pre-existing health conditions such as heart conditions, Down syndrome, diabetes, obesity, immunocompromised state, mood disorders, etc.) is more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19. Many high-risk people who have been infected may require intensive care and the use of a ventilator. They may also develop serious long-term health conditions or die. Roughly one in five people experience serious illness. Among VIPs who have contracted COVID-19 are former President Donald Trump and 2012 GOP presidential candidate Herman Cain, who died from the disease after attending a Trump campaign rally in 2020 that was deemed a "super-spreader" event.

Q: How Serious Are the Delta and Omicron Variants?

A: Since the peak of the Delta variant in September, a new strain of COVID-19 emerged in late November 2021: the Omicron variant. The rapid spread of Omicron is linked to approximately 95 percent of all new COVID-19 cases in the United States. Although similar, these strains of the virus vary in nature. Omicron proliferates in the bronchial tissue, not deep in the lungs as much as previous variants. The Delta variant aligns with the symptoms of the original strain. Significant loss of smell, fever, cough, headache, etc. are shared indicators of contamination for both the Delta and Alpha strains while Omicron typically brings runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, fatigue and other flu-like symptoms. Omicron has proven to be more contagious, spreading 2.7 to 3.7 times more than the Delta variant among vaccinated people, but less severe, resulting in fewer hospitalizations and life-threatening cases. People have reported to experience milder conditions if infected after vaccination.

Q: Why Should I Wear a Mask and Practice Safe Distancing?

A: Masks help protect not only you but also those around you who might be more at risk from the virus. COVID-19 is largely spread from person to person through respiratory droplets and particles in the air that others might breathe in. They can also get on other people's mouth, nose or eyes or contaminate surfaces that others might touch. Since these droplets and particles can travel and remain for some time in the air, adequate ventilation and maintaining a safer distance of at least six feet from others may decrease the risk of spread.

Q: What About Vaccines?

A: According to many experts, COVID-19 vaccines and boosters are the most-effective way to prevent the spread of the virus, reduce its harmful consequences, and end the pandemic.

Editor's Note: Information about COVID-19 and recommendations for dealing with it can change quickly due to new research, changing conditions, and new variants. *For updated information about how to prevent infection, visit www.cdc.gov.*

THE CULTURE

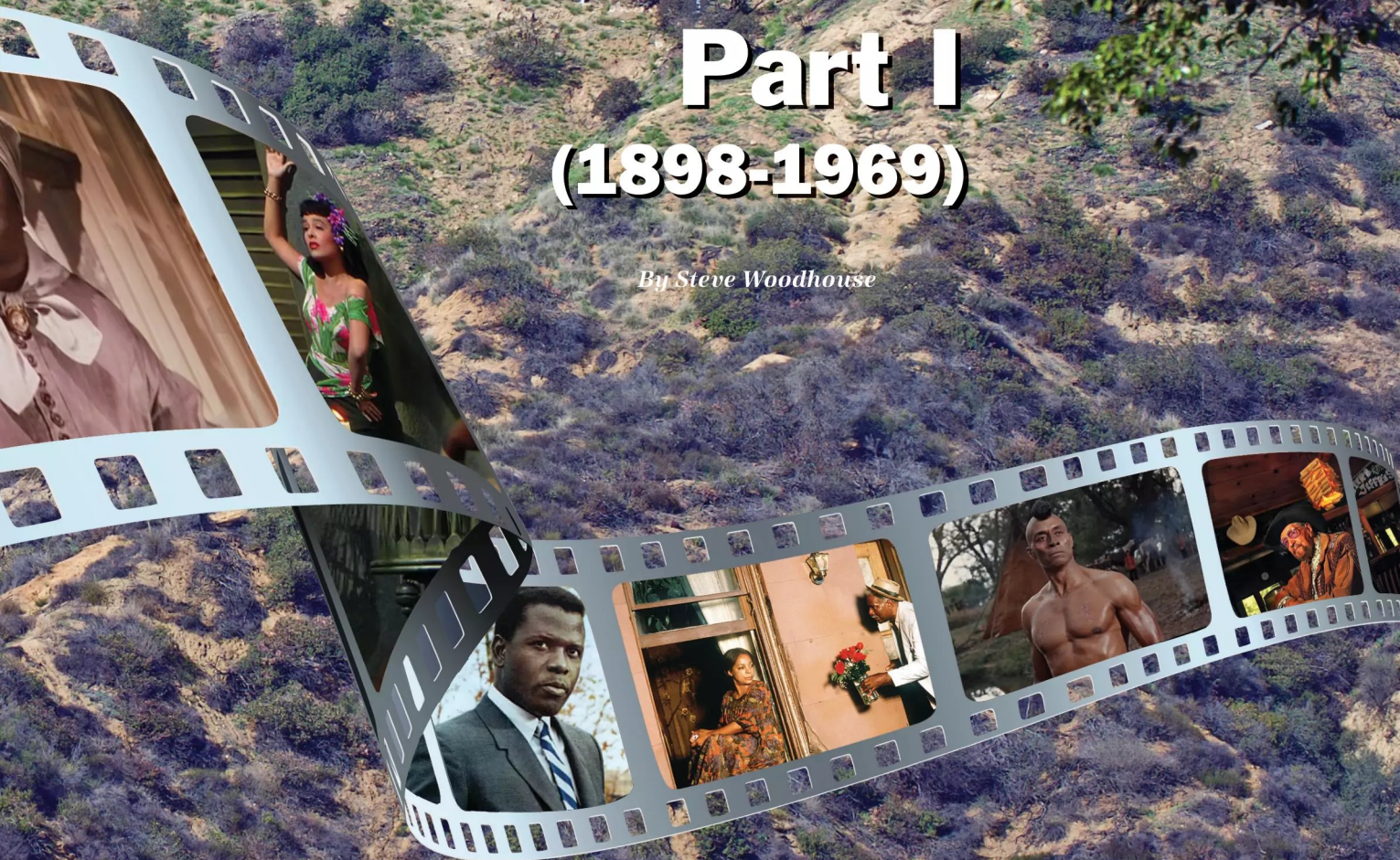
BLACK HOLLYWOOD



WOOD

Part I (1898-1969)

By Steve Woodhouse



For as long as there has been a film industry, black actors have been a part of it. As one looks at the history of black cinema, however, not much has changed in over 125 years regarding behind-the-scenes ownership and the continued stereotypical casting of black actors or characters.

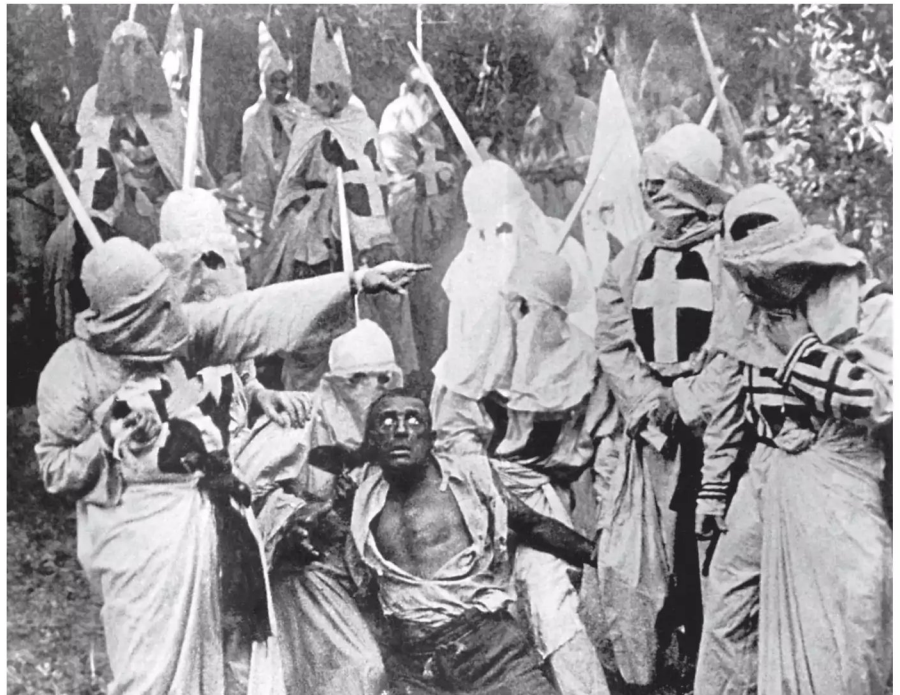
The earliest-known black actor in Hollywood was born Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry, better known as Stepin Fetchit. His career began with vaudeville, and he successfully parlayed the character dubbed “The Laziest Man in the World” from the stage to the screen.

Perry is said to have been the first black actor to make \$1 million, but he unfortunately squandered his talents by making a mockery of those who shared his skin color. He is also alleged to have been an abusive husband behind the scenes. Nevertheless, he has the distinction of being the first black actor to have a film credit.

The roles offered Perry were not his fault. In the early days of film, black characters were often relegated to those of servants, slaves or ignoramuses with bug eyes and big teeth. Several productions backed by white studios didn’t even bother to hire actual black actors, opting instead to put whites in blackface.

This practice was popularized by one of the biggest musicians of the early 20th century, Al Jolson. Depending upon whom you ask, Jolson is either the most successful pillager of black culture of the era—cultivating rhythms from the community for his own gain—or an advocate who strived to raise the image of black entertainers.

Jolson debuted his signature blackface character Gus in *The Whirl of Society* on Broadway in 1912. After adding this character to his repertoire, he was able to command a \$1,000-per-week salary. Gus appeared in future plays as well.



Moving on to films, Jolson’s big breakout was in *The Jazz Singer*. Soon after, he made *Mammy*. Songwriter Noble Sissle said of Jolson’s performance, “With real tears streaming down his blackened face, he immortalized the Negro motherhood of America as no individual could.” Some believe his adoption of traditionally black music made it easier for white audiences to accept it.

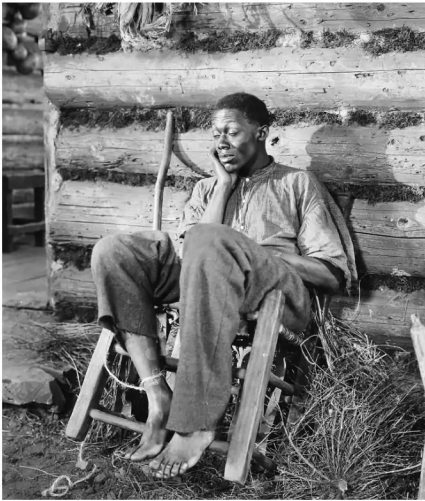
Opinions of Jolson’s use of blackface may vary, but the verdict today is unanimous that the use of the practice in 1915’s *The Birth of a Nation* is a complete disgrace.

It’s a shame that the film, based on a book titled *The Clansman*, has extensive historical significance from a technological standpoint. It was the longest film ever made at the time and the first 12-reel film. It is also the first film ever



TOP: The offensive landmark film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), with white actors in blackface, sparked nationwide protests and race riots.

BOTTOM: *The Birth of a Race* (1918) was a positive rebuttal to the racist *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).



Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry, aka Stepin Fetchit Photo credit: Granger



The Homesteader (1919), filmmaker Oscar Micheaux's debut and the first black feature-length film, has been lost to time.



Landmark African American filmmaker Oscar Micheaux



White actors often portrayed African "savages."

Dorothy Dandridge

The life and career of Dorothy Dandridge can be viewed as one of the earliest tales of the dark side of entertainment or one of the first triumphs for black entertainers.

Dandridge was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on Nov. 9, 1922. She spent her formative years performing with her sister, Vivian, as the Wonder Children—later renamed the Dandridge Sisters.

Her mother, Ruby, was an entertainer who created a routine for her girls. They toured without their mother or much education for years, however. The two became regulars on the nightclub circuit, including the Cotton Club and the Apollo.

They made sporadic appearances in various shorts, including *Our Gang* in 1935. Dorothy's film career began with small roles in "race films" before stepping into the big time with co-stars such as the Marx Brothers and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson.

She had earned the clout to reject film roles she felt were demeaning. As her film career grew, her talents as a singer and dancer were showcased—as well as her sex appeal.

Dandridge's first big movie break was *Carmen Jones*, opposite Harry Belafonte, Diahann Carroll, Pearl Bailey and others, in 1954. By 1954, she had firmly established herself as a sex symbol, and she was the first black woman to be on the cover of *Life*.

Carmen Jones was a success and led to an Academy Award nomination for Dandridge. She was the first black woman ever to be nominated for Best Actress and the first black performer to be nominated for a leading role.

With her growing fame, she became a target for tabloids and successfully sued the publication *Confidential*.

Difficulties plagued her personal life, as she was forced to institutionalize her daughter, endure a studio-forced abortion, and struggle with romantic relationships. Money trouble plagued her in her later years to the point that she was performing singing gigs at smaller venues to help pay a \$139,000 tax debt.

Dandridge's life came to an end on Sept. 8, 1965, and her nude body was discovered in her apartment. Though her life ended, her legacy lives on as she inspired several of today's top performers—including Halle Berry. In 1999, Berry starred in a biopic based on Dandridge's life, which led the fellow Cleveland native to Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild and Primetime Emmy awards.





screened at the White House for segregation-supporting President Woodrow Wilson, his family and staff.

As one would expect from an original work with the word “clan” in it, *The Birth of a Nation* portrays members of the Ku Klux Klan as heroes. Set around the time just after the Civil War, the black characters are portrayed as stupid. Each black male character is written as a rapist, just waiting for the right white woman to come around.

Protests were organized as the realization that the film—whose audience was largely too young to remember Reconstruction, slavery or experiences surrounding the Civil War—was severely damaging to the black community. Some have called it a glorified Klan recruitment picture.

Depictions of blacks as the stereotypical subhuman were not limited to live-action films, however. Cartoons around the time did the same thing.

Enter Oscar Micheaux, who was born in Illinois in 1884. Although a son of former slaves, he would have 44 films to his credit by the end of his career. Written, directed and produced by a black man with black actors,



these films would be quite different.

Micheaux did not enter the film industry immediately upon reaching adulthood. For years, he worked odd jobs before farming on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. A married man at this time, he fought with his minister father-in-law over money. Eventually, he lost his farm due to drought and debt. The experience inspired him to write a book in 1913, partially based in real life and titled *The Conquest*. He sold the book door-to-door, which he



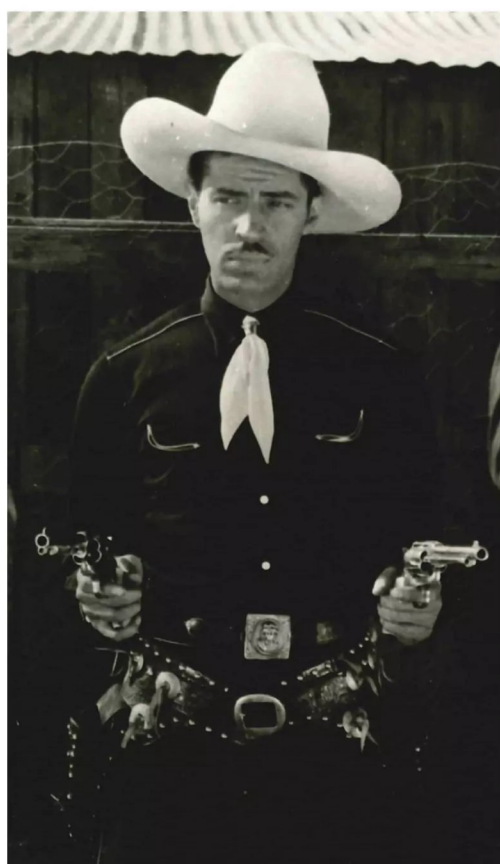
Photo credit: Getty Images

TOP LEFT: Hattie McDaniel stole every scene she was in in the monster hit *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

TOP RIGHT: Dooley Wilson as the piano player Sam at Rick's Café in *Casablanca* (1943). Bogie never said, “Play it again, Sam.”

CENTER: A very young Sammy Davis Jr. (age 7) in *Rufus Jones for President* (1933)

BOTTOM: Rat Packer Sammy Davis Jr. in his prime



I Am The Emperor Jones

The year 1933 was not kind to the image of blacks in the film world. If they weren't portrayed as silly children like Buckwheat in *The Little Rascals* series, they were a laughingstock such as in *Rufus Jones for President* (which featured a 7-year-old Sammy Davis Jr. in his acting debut) or giant apes lusting for blonde white women in the allegorical *King Kong*.

That all changed with one Renaissance man: 35-year-old Paul Robeson. Strapping and charismatic, with a booming baritone voice, Robeson excelled at everything he attempted, from his college days at Rutgers University, where he was an All-American football player, Phi Beta Kappa and champion debater-orator, to earning a law degree at Columbia University's Law School, and through his early career as a Harlem Renaissance figure and stage actor in such plays as *Show Boat* and *Othello*. When a film adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's 1920 play, *The Emperor Jones*, was produced outside the Hollywood studio system, Robeson was the natural to play the title role of Brutus Jones, a fast-living Pullman porter who by accident of circumstance rises to become dictator of a Caribbean island. The film is full of racist tropes that would be frowned upon today—copious use of the N-word, depictions of blacks as essentially savages, and the like—but the film is still memorable for casting a black male lead—with his shirt off no less!—at a time when such a notion was practically scandalous. It would not be repeated for another 20 years at least.

TOP LEFT: Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, known as Jack Benny's sidekick, had a film career spanning 30 years.

TOP RIGHT: Lillian Randolph was a memorable character in the Christmas staple *It's a Wonderful Life* [1946].

BOTTOM: Herb Jeffries (billed as Herbert Jeffrey) gained fame as "The Bronze Buckaroo," the first black singing cowboy (*Harlem on the Prairie*, 1937).

Was Betty Boop Based on a Black Entertainer?



Offensive portrayals of black people were common in early cartoons, but the influence of black culture helped bring success to others.

Betty Boop was created by Max Fleischer in August 1930. The character became a cartoon icon, known for her high-pitched voice, use of the word “boop” in her singing, short dresses, and

a figure drawn to match ideal female dimensions for most heterosexual males.

Questions began to circulate as to which real-life person inspired the character. Among those believed to be the inspiration was Harlem jazz singer Esther Jones, a black woman with similar tones, singing style and performance ties as Betty Boop.

However, as Betty grew in popularity and earned her own cartoon, a white singer, Helen Kane, sued Fleischer in 1932, accusing him of infringing on her gimmicks.

Decades later, PBS tried to learn who truly inspired Betty Boop, only to find out that there was no individual inspiration for the character. Rather, it was an amalgamation of the musical, clothing and dancing styles of the time.

“Esther Jones was a truly talented young performer,” Fleischer’s grandson and manager of the company that owns the right to Betty Boop, Mark Fleischer, told PBS. “What is so problematic here is that to mistakenly single her out—or anyone else—as the sole source of Betty Boop’s Jazz Age inspiration creates an untrue narrative that distracts from and potentially eclipses our appreciation and enjoyment of the very real contributions that those involved have made to our culture. ... This would include Esther Jones ... Esther Jones was a real person with her own real story that deserves to be heard.”



also did with his second book in 1915, titled *The Forged Note: A Romance of the Darker Races*.

Hollywood already had a black director, William Foster, and “race pictures” had become a thing via Luther Pollard’s Ebony Film Corporation. According to an article on Micheaux on CNET.com, Noble Johnson was the closest thing Hollywood had to a black movie star. As such, Johnson looked to produce films with heroic black characters and worked to convince Micheaux to let him adapt his third book, *The Homesteader*, for the screen. Johnson’s white bosses at Universal put the kibosh on the plans, however.

This did not stop Micheaux. With a \$15,000 budget, he fled the typical movie hotspots and began to make *The Homesteader*, the first film with an all-black cast, in the Midwest—specifically, Iowa and Illinois.

The Homesteader premiered on Feb. 20, 1919, in an 8,000-seat theater in Chicago. Black audiences and critics loved it, but financial woes continued for Micheaux. He worked tirelessly to show his film wherever he could, bringing the reels with him across the country, but he ran into several problems. White audiences were not receptive to it, he was sabotaged by his ex-father-in-law, and movie ticket prices in black theaters were a fraction of those in white theaters.

Even with these setbacks, Micheaux had still garnered a level of fame that allowed him to continue making films. In 1920, he produced *Within Our Gates*, which served as a direct response to *The Birth of a Nation*. In it, the Klan is more accurately depicted as white oppressors.

The response was indicative of Micheaux’s character, as he had long before garnered a reputation for being outspoken. He continued to make movies, and one of his most significant achievements was producing *The Exile*



in 1931. Another retelling of the incidents on the reservation, this film was the first full-length “talkie” with an all-black cast and included song and dance numbers.

Despite his significant contributions to film, when Micheaux died in 1957 at the age of 61, he was bankrupt, despite continuously making films for 30 years.

Micheaux’s work in the 1920s was aided by performer Paul Robeson, who stunned audiences wherever he went. Robeson was a world-class baritone and a former NFL player. In 1933, he became the face of *The Emperor Jones* (see page 55).

Written by Eugene O’Neill and directed by Dudley Murphy, *The Emperor Jones* tells the story of a black American who flees the law to an island nation. Eventually, he proclaims himself to be the emperor and oppresses the natives through high taxation and intimidation. The script calls for someone who can carry a production on his own, and Robeson’s commanding presence and voice fit perfectly for the “emperor” soliloquies.



FACING PAGE LEFT: William “Billie” Thomas Jr., aka Buckwheat from the *The Little Rascals*

FACING PAGE TOP RIGHT: Brock Peters was Tom Robinson, the black man put on trial for raping a white woman in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962).

FACING PAGE BOTTOM RIGHT: William D. Foster formed the Foster Photoplay Company, the first black film production company, in 1910.

THIS PAGE TOP LEFT: Louis Armstrong’s music graced many films of the era (such as *High Society*, 1956).

THIS PAGE TOP RIGHT: Harry Belafonte, calypso singer turned movie star (*The World, the Flesh and the Devil*, 1959) Photo credit: Getty Images

THIS PAGE BOTTOM LEFT: *Something Good — Negro Kiss* (1898), the first depiction of black screen love and possibly the first known black film

THIS PAGE BOTTOM RIGHT: Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Black Hollywood’s First Couple

Lena Horne and *Stormy Weather* (1940s)

Films featuring an all-black cast in 1943 were rare enough, but a film with a cast of *all-star* blacks was virtually unheard of—until 20th Century Fox released *Stormy Weather*. (There was one other all-black musical, *Cabin in the Sky*, released by MGM that year.)

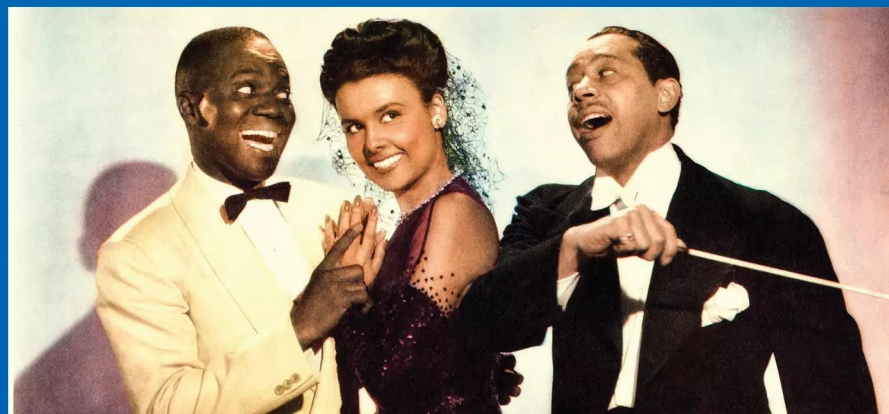
No doubt the acting shortage during World War II, when many stars signed up for service—blacks were not quite as in demand yet by Uncle Sam—created an opening for previously overlooked talent, and Harlem's Best took full advantage when Hollywood came calling.

The film achieved many firsts. It was Lena Horne's second film performance, but it was the one where she sang the haunting title song "Stormy Weather," making her an elegantly sultry sex symbol. She was in good company, with scene-stealing performances by bandleader Cab Calloway, the dancing Nicholas Brothers, and Fats Waller. Waller's renditions of "Ain't Misbehavin'" and other songs would become classics. The film still closely hues to black stereotypes of the era, but it was nevertheless a major breakthrough for African Americans in Tinseltown. Unfortunately, it was short-lived; Horne would complain that the expensive Max Factor makeup designed for her went instead to Ava Gardner.

In 2001, *Stormy Weather* was selected for the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant."



Theatrical poster for *Stormy Weather* (1943)



Theatrical poster for *Stormy Weather* (1943). Cab Calloway was a featured star of the landmark film that introduced the glamorous Lena Horne to movie audiences.

Black characters continued to be portrayed as servants into the 1930s, but that did not necessarily limit an actor's ability to make the most of his or her talents and screen time. Hattie McDaniel best represented this in *Gone With the Wind*.

Based on Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel, *Gone With the Wind* remains a landmark in the history of film for many reasons. While the film centers around the exploits of debutante Scarlett O'Hara, McDaniel's character, Mammy, is memorable in every scene she is in.

Mammy, of course, was written as a house slave maid during the 1860s. McDaniel demonstrated, however, that while she may have been typecast as the image of a black woman in that time period, it didn't mean she had to be quiet or subservient. Mammy is constantly the voice of reason, strength and accountability in the film.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences recognized her significant contributions to the classic, and she became the first black person to win an Oscar. Sadly, even though she earned her trophy alongside co-star Vivien Leigh, she was forced to sit in a segregated part of the ceremony. When the film premiered in Atlanta, she could not attend because the theater was whites-only. Further disappointment for McDaniel followed her in death, as she could not fulfill her wish to be buried in the Hollywood Cemetery due to segregation. Her death was in 1952, 89 years after slavery was abolished.

Just nine years before McDaniel's death, Hollywood took a chance on a pair of musicals that were among the first mainstream films to portray blacks in non-stereotypical roles. The year 1943 brought us *Cabin*



TOP: Woody Strode, perhaps the first black male sex symbol

BOTTOM: Uncle Remus and Br'er Rabbit in *Song of the South* (1946), a movie so offensive that Disney pulled it from showings for the next 75 years.

in the Sky and *Stormy Weather*, both of which feature the great Lena Horne.

Both films utilize a predominantly black cast, with black actors receiving top billing. Steps were being taken to integrate films a little more, but these films were rarities at the time.

Musicals continued to help bring black actors into the mainstream, as another stage production, *Porgy and Bess*, was adapted in 1959. Long before the film impressed audiences, cast members such as Sidney Poitier, Dorothy Dandridge, Sammy Davis Jr. and Pearl Bailey were famous regardless of a fan's color.

Another well-known entertainer, Harry Belafonte, had refused to appear in the film due to its stereotypical portrayal of black characters.

Dandridge and Belafonte had previously shared the screen together in the early 1950s in *Bright Road* and *Carmen Jones*. Both were well-established musicians. Due to Belafonte's concerns about black characterization, he spent much of the 1960s focused on his music.

A decade before *Porgy and Bess*, Poitier had to choose between film or the stage. He chose film, with results showing he chose wisely.

Poitier's achievements

Sidney Poitier Scores a Trifecta, 1967

Photo credit: Getty Images



Poitier's Oscar for Best Actor (*Lilies of the Field*), 1964



With Rod Steiger, *In the Heat of the Night*

If there is such a thing as a Horatio Alger success story, Sidney L. Poitier is it.

Born in 1927 in Miami but raised in the Bahamas, where his parents owned a farm, he moved to New York City at 16, where he started out as a dishwasher. A brief stint in the World War II Army followed, after which Poitier was enamored of the urge to perform.

His first try as a stage actor for the American Negro Theater flopped, largely because of his thick Bahamian accent, so he listened to radio broadcasts to drop the accent and reauditioned. The second time around was the charm, and he never looked back.

Poitier quickly attracted the attention of Hollywood and was given one groundbreaking role after another, working under such filmmaking legends as Darryl F. Zanuck, William Wellman and Stanley Kramer and co-starring with top draws, such as Tony Curtis in *The Defiant Ones* (1958).



With co-stars (including Tracy and Hepburn) in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (Interracial marriage was still illegal in several states.) Photo credit: Getty Images

His efforts were rewarded in 1964, when he became the first African American to win the coveted Best Actor Oscar for his performance in *Lilies of the Field* (1963), edging out such luminaries as Albert Finney, Richard Harris, Rex Harrison and Paul Newman.

It didn't stop there. Poitier hit his crescendo in 1967, when three films made him the number-one box office draw worldwide. In *To Sir, with Love*, he taught a classroom full of lower-class teens in London's East End (among them the singer Lulu) how to give and get respect. In his next film, *In the Heat of the Night*, he came into contact with Southern racism as Virgil Tibbs, a Philadelphia detective passing through Sparta, Miss. Originally mistaken for a murder suspect by the bigoted local sheriff (played by Rod Steiger in an Oscar-winning performance) because he looked too successful for a black man, he is eventually recruited by the sheriff to solve the murder, which he does in brilliant (if dangerous) fashion. His line—"They call me MR. Tibbs!"—is among the most

memorable in cinema history.

Poitier's showstopper, however, was *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, highly controversial at the time because interracial marriage was still illegal in 16 states. (That same year, these laws were declared unconstitutional in the U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Loving v. Virginia*.) By today's standards, *Guess* is relatively tame; the white-black relationship is mostly platonic, and the attention was really focused on Spencer Tracy in his final film role (which won him an Oscar nomination for Best Actor, his ninth) and Katharine Hepburn, both of whom carried on a real-life illicit romance for several decades.

What is beyond dispute is that Poitier's screen dignity and grace elevated the image of the African American male from negative stereotypes of 50 years past to reflect a changing world brought about by the Civil Rights Movement and provided a bridge to the era of Black Power in Hollywood that was to come at the dawn of the 1970s.

Poitier passed away on January 6, 2022, at age 94.

in entertainment pale in comparison to his truly extraordinary life overall. Through the course of his career, he was nominated for countless awards from various film industry organizations. He was the first black man to win an Oscar, for his work in 1963's *Lilies of the Field*, and *Porgy and Bess* led to one of his 10 Golden Globe nominations.

In 2007, Poitier was presented the Cecil B. DeMille Award from the Globes, as well as lifetime achievement awards from the American Film Institute and the Screen Actors Guild. His impressive filmography extends for decades, but just among the 1950s and 1960s, he starred in classics such as *No Way Out*, *Blackboard Jungle*, *The Defiant Ones*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, *In the Heat of the Night*, and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*.

The success of multitalented black entertainers paved the way for Woody Strode. Strode was a decathlete who also played professional football and baseball in his career. He served with the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, and, as if that wasn't enough of a diverse resume, he also spent time as a professional wrestler.

Strode's acting career included many gigs during the 1950s, but his defining moment as an actor came in 1960's *Spartacus*. Strode portrayed Draba, the opponent of Kirk Douglas' titular protagonist in an iconic scene. The characters were expected to fight to the death, but instead of killing Spartacus, Draba attacks the Romans and spurs a gladiatorial rebellion.

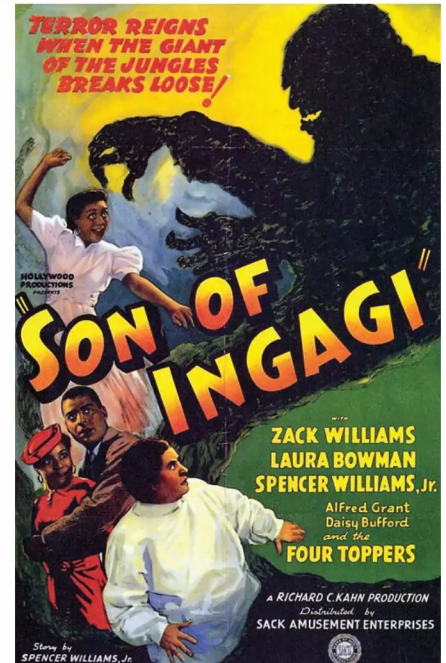
For his work in *Spartacus*, Strode was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the Golden Globes. In the years that followed, he portrayed more heroes. After befriending famed



director John Ford, he was cast with John Wayne in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and has the distinction of being one of the few actors who saved The Duke on screen.

Strode's role in that same film included a scene in which he recites the Declaration of Independence, forgetting the part where "all men are created equal." It was an indicator for what was to come in black cinema.

The 1970s would bring us Blaxploitation, as well as commentary on the Vietnam War and the ongoing racial divide in the country. Read more about that in Part II.



TOP: Ex-football star Jim Brown made it big in the movies too (here in *The Dirty Dozen*, 1967).

CENTER LEFT: *Porgy and Bess* (1959), a hit musical of the decade

CENTER RIGHT: *Son of Ingagi* (1940), the first science-fiction horror film featuring an all-black cast

BOTTOM: The first film footage featuring black Rough Riders at San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War, 1898

THE ADVENTURES OF BAVUAL ADISA

CHAPTER II

BAVUAL MEETS

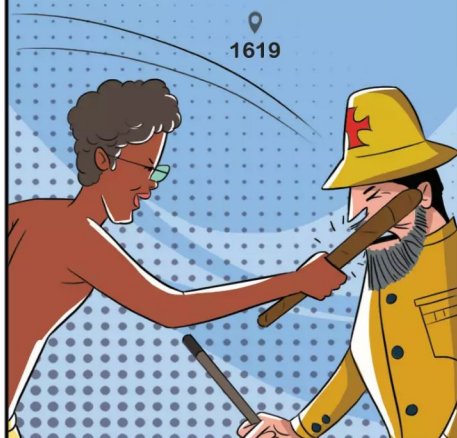
a young Barack Obama in 1987

Illustrated by Debasish Sarma

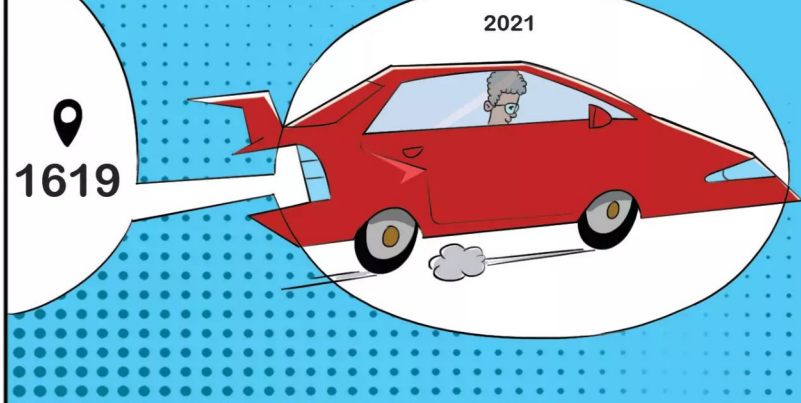
Written by Earl Birkett



Bavual fights off his captors and barely manages to escape back to his hovering invisible Lambo.



Bavual returns to 2021 to find it a nuclear wasteland. The GBF is gone and Mr. Earl is dead! Apparently, Barack Obama was never elected president. He never even ran for office or attended Harvard Law School.

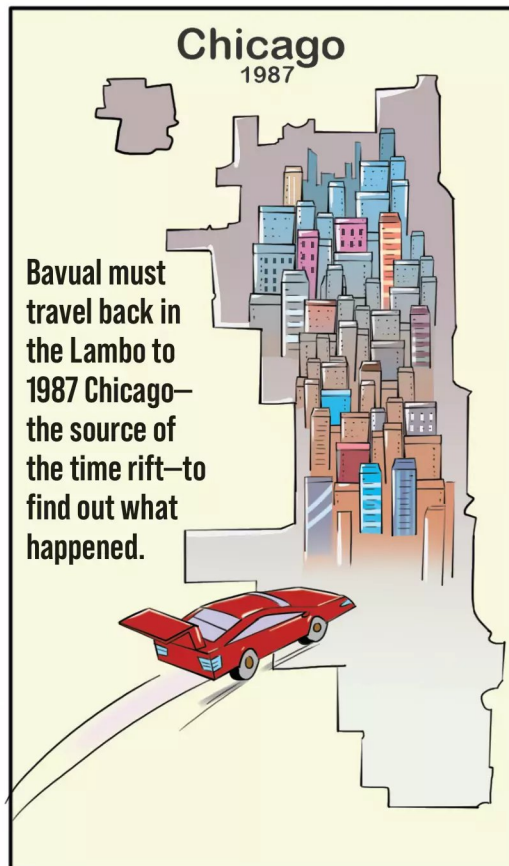


Checking a 2016 CNN headline he finds the truth: President Sarah Palin Declares War on China.



Chicago
1987

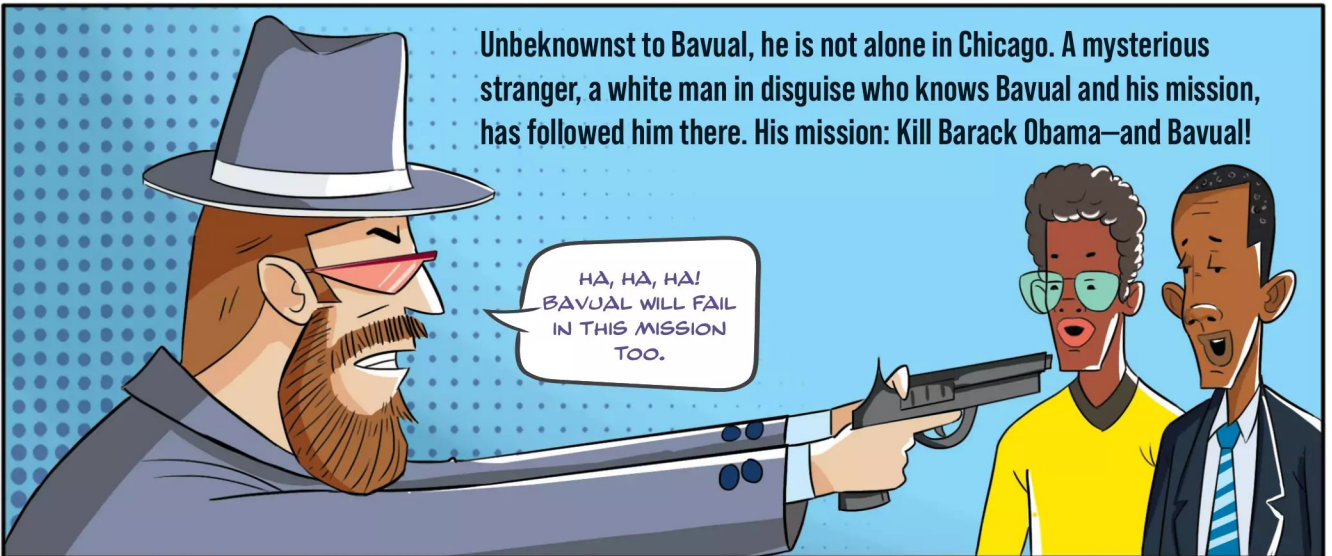
Bavual must travel back in the Lambo to 1987 Chicago—the source of the time rift—to find out what happened.



Bavual meets 26-year-old Barack Obama, working the photo copier at a Chicago law firm.



Unbeknownst to Bavual, he is not alone in Chicago. A mysterious stranger, a white man in disguise who knows Bavual and his mission, has followed him there. His mission: Kill Barack Obama—and Bavual!



Before he pulls the trigger to kill Obama, Bavual overpowers the gunman.

He flees, saying

"I'LL BE BACK! SEE YOU IN 34 YEARS."

Bavual recognizes his voice.





Black Tudors in the 16th Century

Yes, there were black people in Tudor England—and no, they were not slaves. (Slavery was allowed only in the British colonies, never in England itself.) In the historical work *Black Tudors: The Untold Story*, by Miranda Kaufmann (Oneworld Publications, 2018), it is revealing to discover that it was not considered beyond the pale in 1596 England for a black porter named Edward Swarthy to publicly whip a white servant on behalf of their common employer.

Some of Kaufmann's more enlightening stories:

- John Blanke, an African court trumpeter who played at the coronation of Henry VII in 1485, was held in such high esteem that the king paid for his wedding outfit. He demanded—and received—good money for his services.
- By the end of the 16th century, there were 10 Africans living in Southampton, one of whom, Jacques Francis, was a diver searching for the wreck of the *Mary Rose*, Henry VIII's great warship, which had sunk in 1545. At the time, the idea of immersing oneself in water was regarded with considerable suspicion by most of the population, so homegrown divers were hard to come by.
- Far from there being any sexual prejudice against black people, a number of them married white men or women.
- Many Africans perished in the Plague, with some of them given funerals "grander than

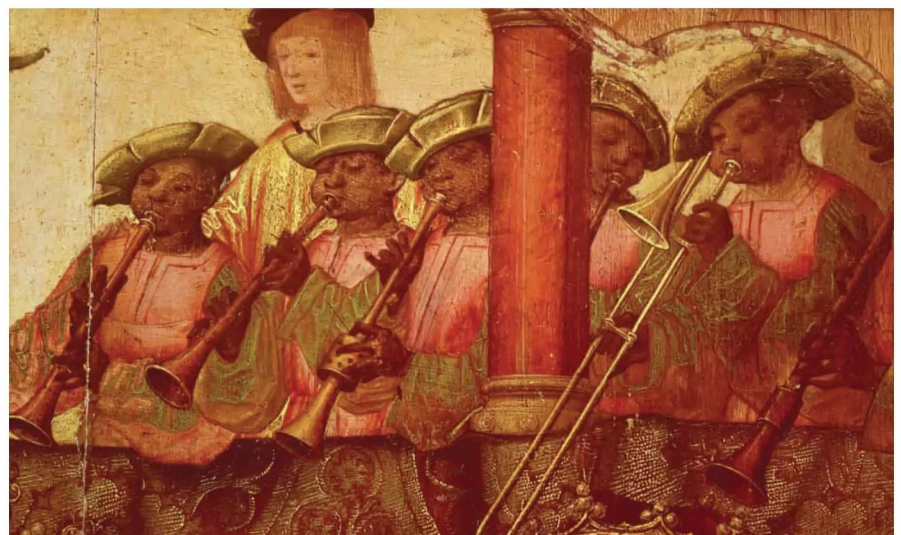
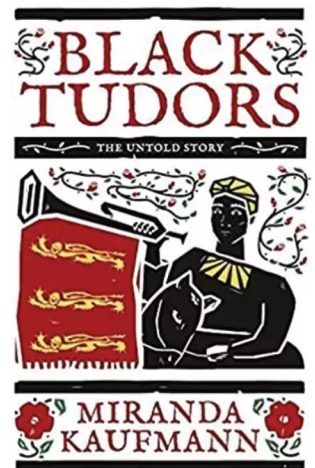
those recorded for non-African parishioners."

- The identity of Shakespeare's Dark Lady—to whom he wrote several of his sonnets—is one of literature's most enduring mysteries. Kaufmann suggests she might have been an African prostitute called Anne Cobbie, known as "the Tawny Moor with Soft Skin," who was greatly esteemed by a number of prominent men of the period. Indeed, Anne was in such high demand that she was able to charge five times as much as her white colleagues.

Official records make few references to black people, so Kaufmann has had to try to reconstruct these lives from whatever information is available. Some of it is pure fiction based on supposition, but it does not take away from the overall fact that being black in 16th century England vs. the 17th century American colonies was vastly different.

RIGHT: *Portrait of a Moor*, by Jan Mostaert, c. 1525-1530

BELOW: *Black musicians in a Portuguese painting of The Engagement of St. Ursula and Prince Etherius*, c. 1520 Photo credit: BridgemanImages.com



Making Art History

The Enigmatic Jean-Michel Basquiat Breaks Record at 2017 Auction

By Rick Bowers

\$110.5 million!

Arguably, the biggest news for an American-born artist was made in 2017 by Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) when one of his 1982 paintings of a skull—*Untitled*—sold at auction for this incredible sum. More recently, in May 2021, another one of his skull paintings, a 1983 piece titled *In This Case*, sold for \$93.1 million.

Although his first painting, *Cadillac Moon*, sold for a mere \$200 in 1981, the largely self-taught artist who says he failed all his art classes, soon became an international art sensation and a millionaire while he was only in his 20s—and while he was still alive.

Dealing With Racism

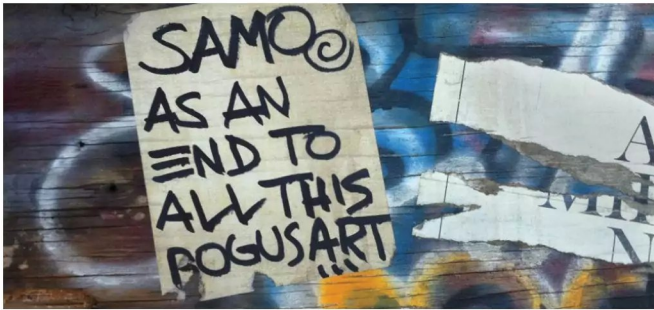
Unfortunately, even as a famous millionaire artist, the Brooklyn-born Basquiat, who was of Haitian and Puerto Rican descent and started as a graffiti writer in the 1970s, didn't feel truly accepted in his everyday life or in the artworld.

"They still call me a graffiti artist," he was reported to complain. "Graffiti had become another word for [the n-word]," his friend Fred Brathwaite explained. Another friend recalled a time when the artist

was held up in customs at an airport for two hours because they didn't believe a black man with dreadlocks could pay for first class.

Many of Basquiat's paintings are, in fact, recognized for their social commentary on class struggle, hypocrisy and racial inequality. They include





SAMO© 1980s graffiti art Courtesy New York Beat Film LLC/The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat/Edo Bertoglio

such subjects as slave sales, the unjust Jim Crow system, and the brutal beating and killing of a young black man by the police. His 1981 painting *Irony of Negro Policeman* appears to contain the word PAWN and is likely a criticism of blacks being used as puppets by the dominant white system to control their own people.

Suzanne Mallouk, one of the artist's former girlfriends, noted that "everything he did was an attack on racism."

According to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, "Basquiat challenged Western history by creating images that honor black men as kings and saints. The artist used a crown, his signature recurring motif, to portray his heroes—renowned athletes, musicians, and writers—in a majestic light."

Still, although Basquiat included blacks as a subject in an art culture that often neglected them, he simultaneously wanted to be recognized as an *artist*, not simply as a *black artist*. Unfortunately, in his eyes, he never achieved that much-desired distinction.

Impact on the Artworld

On the other hand, even though Basquiat only had a few productive years as an artist, his impact was undeniably epic. Like Rembrandt, Picasso and Warhol, he has certainly reached the level of other top artists of any race who are well-known

FACING PAGE TOP: **Jean-Michel Basquiat**

Photo credit: Julio Donoso/Sygma via Getty Images

FACING PAGE BOTTOM: **Untitled, 1982** Courtesy Sotheby's



TOP: **Warrior, 1982** Courtesy Christie's Images Ltd.



BOTTOM: **In This Case, 1983** Courtesy Christie's Images Ltd.

by a single name. From marking the walls of New York City with graffiti and selling postcards xeroxed from his art for \$1 each, to meeting and collaborating with some of the most famous artists of all time, including the instantly recognizable Father of Pop Art, Andy Warhol, his life and work is a major part of art history. When his painting sold for \$110.5 million and broke the record for the highest price paid at auction for a work by an American artist, it broke the record previously held by his friend, mentor and frequent collaborator, Andy Warhol, for his 1963 work *Silver Car Crash (Double Disaster)*, which sold in 2013 for \$105.4 million.

Basquiat's popularity was driven by both the uniqueness of his art itself and his extraordinary backstory and charisma. It's a tale of growing up middle class, then leaving home from time to time at 15, and then becoming homeless and sleeping in the homes of friends or lovers, while at the same time unwaveringly dedicating himself to spraying graffiti on buildings and painting on any object he could find. Art was his life, regardless of the money. The tale then changed dramatically when he shot to the top of the artworld in extraordinary time and then began to paint in expensive Armani suits, spend extravagantly from his newly acquired wealth, and hang out with the rich and famous. A mythological "hero's journey" made real.

The Ingredients of Style

As a child, Basquiat often visited various museums with his mother, who encouraged his artistic pursuits. He dreamed of becoming a cartoonist, and while he was in the hospital after being hit by a car when he was 7, his mother bought him a



Untitled Courtesy Christie's Images Ltd.

copy of *Gray's Anatomy*, which included anatomical drawings, to keep him from being bored. In 1976, Basquiat and his school friend, Al Diaz, formed a team and began spraying the city walls with graffiti using the name SAMO®, which meant "same old shit." Their messages included such statements as "LIFE IS CONFUSING AT THIS POINT." At 17, Basquiat quit school and left home to live on his own. In time, he made some new friends, and they started the band Gray. He often hung out with musicians, filmmakers and artists at various venues.

All of these early influences—his visits to museums, his mixed Afrocentric heritage, the cartooning, *Gray's Anatomy*, his graffiti writing, music, and his rebellious nature—would become the ingredients of his unique personal and artistic style.

"Basquiat found inspiration in everything around him," according to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. "He read constantly and often listened to music or watched television while painting. The artist immersed himself in high art and graffiti, jazz and rap, punk and pop



Irony of Negro Policeman, 1981

culture, medical textbooks and comic books, and then channelled this complexity into sophisticated, layered work that anticipated today's Internet culture."

According to curator Eleanor Nairne, "His genius lay in distilling the culture that he witnessed into a visual language full of encrypted references—each charged with endless layers of meaning. In his canvases, you find nods to his Haitian and Puerto Rican heritage; to the pioneers of bebop; comic-book heroes; the masters of 20th-century art; ancient Egyptian mythology; notable African-American figures... The list goes on and on." (*Vogue*, September 20, 2017)

After exhibiting his art in a few group shows in the U.S. and abroad, in 1982, he had his first U.S. solo art show, which garnered great reviews. After that show, he was on his way to phenomenal success.

The Critics and the Defense

Although Basquiat became one of the most popular artists ever, he also had his critics. Art critic Hilton Kramer, for example,



Dustheads, 1982. Courtesy Christie's Images Ltd.

called him a “talentless hustler” who was ignorant about art.

For those, like Kramer, who might question Basquiat’s genius and artistic abilities because his paintings often appear to be childlike, the style was, of course, intentionally developed. The enigmatic artist often combined words, pictures, numbers and symbols in his paintings and then sometimes scribbled parts of them out to form a collage of thoughts and ideas. The works are somewhat like a person thinking and rethinking and then leaving his thought processes to be viewed and pondered by others.

“I like kids’ work more than work by real artists any day,” he explained as part of the reasoning behind his childlike neo-expressionist style.

Death and Legacy

Unfortunately, like many artists, musicians and actors who rise quickly and live fast, Basquiat died young of a heroin overdose in 1988 at age 27.

His early death only added to his aura, however. As a result, he will always be remembered as a hip young trendsetter who made art and lived on his own terms. As evidence of his coolness, in 2007, he ranked No. 7 out of 50 in *GQ*’s listing of the 50 Most Stylish Men of the Past 50 Years. His dreadlocks, designer suits, and bare feet remain a Basquiat signature today.

According to a *New York Times* article, he “was the most famous of only a small number of young black artists who have achieved national recognition.” Since his death, his works have grown in value exponentially.

Recent Controversies

In recent months, questions have arisen about the use of Basquiat’s art by the exorbitantly wealthy.

In August, when power couple JAY-Z and Beyoncé appeared in front of a Basquiat painting in a

jewelry ad for Tiffany & Co., many of the artist’s fans complained that he would have hated being used to sell jewelry, especially jewelry that some have called “blood diamonds,” meaning diamonds that may have been mined by oppressed Africans.

In addition, if the artist was indeed anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist, as his art suggests, he might be upset to know that his paintings have become a status symbol for some of the world’s richest capitalists.

“Once, we brought him to a dinner party organised by a prominent gallerist,” said Herb and Lenore Shorr, two of Basquiat’s earliest collectors. “It took about five minutes for him to say, ‘Let’s get the hell out of here.’ He dismissed everyone there as ‘real-estate collectors,’ people who bought art for status.” (*Vogue*, September 20, 2017)

According to Olivia Laing, author of *Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency*, “One of his obsessions was black talent and what happened to it, the way that jazz musicians and sports stars ... might accrue fame and money and yet remained trapped in a white system, exploited and belittled, still susceptible to being bought and sold.”

So, what would Basquiat have thought of what some have called the exploitation of his name and art?

These words of the Shorrs and Laing offer a great hint.

And yet, even this perceived exploitation brings attention to his work and has made him the highest-selling American-born artist—*artist*, not *black artist*—at auction in history.

As SAMO© once wrote, “LIFE IS CONFUSING AT THIS POINT.”

For More Information

www.basquiat.com

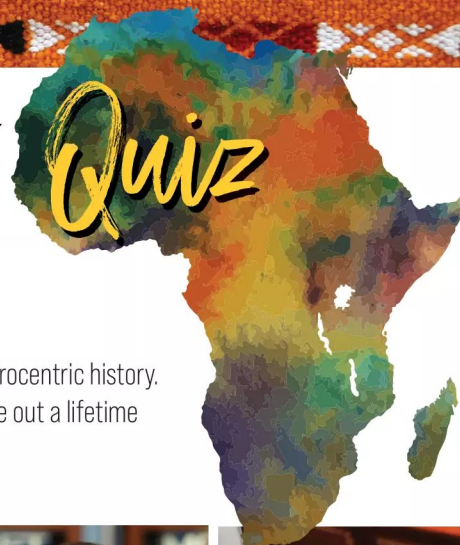
Jean Michel-Basquiat exhibition opens April 9 at the Starrett-Lehigh Building in Manhattan.
<https://kingpleasure.basquiat.com>

BLACK HISTORY

So you think you know black history?

COVERING 1971-2021

To give every age group a fighting chance, this issue's quiz spotlights the last 50 years of Afrocentric history. There are 18 questions. SCORE: 17 = A, 15 = B, 13 = C, 11 = D, 10 or less means you need to take out a lifetime subscription to *BAVUAL*.



Milli Vanilli Photo credit: Michael Putland/Getty Images



George Foreman
Photo credit: David Livingston/Getty Images



Gwen Ifill Photo credit: Alex Wong



Bobby Rush Photo credit: Pablo Martinez Monsivais/AP/Shutterstock

PEOPLE

1. How many times was George Foreman the World Heavyweight Champion? **BONUS:** What famous invention is credited to him?
2. What inhuman practice was Idi Amin accused of?
3. How was Atlanta child serial killer Wayne Williams eventually caught?
4. What incident caused the end of Milli Vanilli's musical career?
5. Former Black Panther Bobby Rush is the only person ever to hand a general election defeat to this now-famous politician. Who was he?
6. The late journalist Gwen Ifill was moderator of which presidential debate(s)?

PLACES

1. There is currently a New Black Wall Street Market near Atlanta. Where was the original Black Wall Street located?
2. What country is the site of the largest genocide in African history?
3. What Caribbean island was considered the capitalist counterpoint to Communist Cuba during the Cold War?
4. Where did Ronald Reagan kick off his 1980 presidential campaign, and what was its significance during the Civil Rights Movement?
5. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, what is the best country for black families?
6. Also according to *U.S. News & World Report*, what is the worst country for black families?



Photo credit: Chris Hunt for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*



Photo credit: James Leynse
Corbis/Getty Images

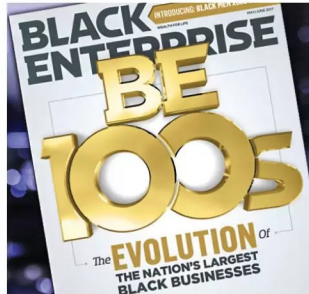


Photo credit:
Sarel Kromer

EVENTS

1. What was the trigger to the 1971 prison uprising at Attica, N.Y.?
2. How many people attended the Million Man March in Washington, D.C., in 1995?
3. How many black Americans served in America's last four wars? Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq, Afghanistan?
4. What was the dispute between Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill during his 1991 Senate confirmation hearings for U.S. Supreme Court associate justice?
5. What is the difference in revenue between the most-recent #1 corporation on the *Fortune 500* list and the #1 corporation on the *Black Enterprise 100* list?
6. Who was the FEMA administrator during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and what did then-President George W. Bush praise him for?

Answers to the quiz are at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIgvOWPEiIo> or contact us at eab@bavual.com for the YouTube video link.



Clarence Thomas



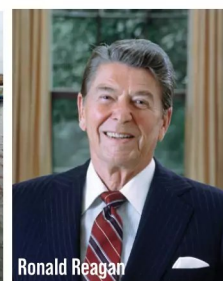
Anita Hill



Idi Amin



Hurricane Katrina, 2005



Ronald Reagan

Blacks Are Making It in the Highly Competitive World of Hair Care

By Kristen Jones

Africans and people of African descent around the world have used hairstyling as a form of expression since the beginning of civilization. Black hair has always been an integral feature of black history and culture. Everything from African tribal styles to dreadlocks and the afro have been thought to have roots that trace back to early African civilizations, such as Egypt, as well as ancient Greece in the case of dreadlocks.

Hairstyles could indicate a person's family background, tribe or social status. Headdresses and hairstyles indicated status, identity and other circumstances across Africa, including in Cameroon, Ivory Coast and southern Africa. When men from the Wolof tribe (in modern Senegal and The Gambia) went to war, for example, they wore a braided style, while women in mourning would either not "do" their hair or would adopt a subdued style.

During the time of the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the U.S. (1619-1808), as many as 11,640,000 enslaved people were transported from Africa. What little these slaves were allowed to keep included their hair practices and hair tools—one of which was the wide-tooth comb still used today.



Courtesy of Black Girl Church



Photo credit: Emma Lee/WHYY

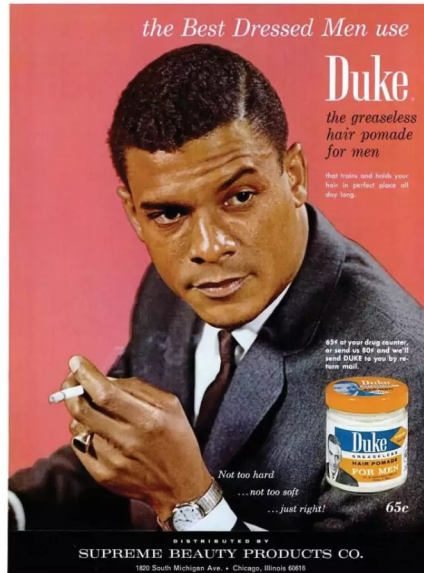
The Barber Shop and the Beauty Salon: Black America's Social Clubs and "Social Media"



**Madam C.J. Walker;
Walker's Wonderful
Hair Grower**

During the 19th century, traditional African styles were frowned upon, as the desire to conform to white society resulted in black women seeking alternative ways to smooth out their hair texture in hopes of blending in.

Said to be the first entrepreneur of hair products, Anthony Overton, who was born into slavery in 1865, founded the Overton Hygienic Manufacturing Company in 1898. The company initially sold one product, baking powder, but eventually branched into cosmetics, perfumes and toiletries appealing to African American women. Although he went bankrupt as a result of damages to his business from the Kansas River Flood of 1902, Overton resumed manufacturing and selling products, but now to a nationwide (and eventually an international) market that included Egypt, Liberia and Japan. By 1927, his cosmetic business alone employed 150 people, most of whom were black women, in clerical and manufacturing positions. The



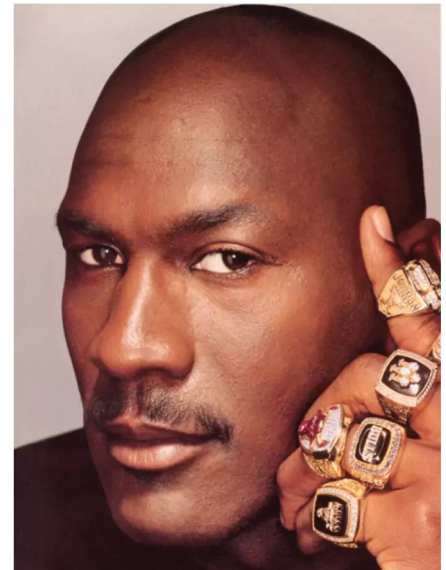
**Duke Greaseless Hair Pomade:
The look through the 1960s**



Michael Jackson popularized the Jheri curl in the 1980s.



Johnson Products' Afro Sheen ruled the 1970s.



Michael Jordan made bald beautiful.



LEFT: Dreadlocks date back to ancient Egypt and Greece.

ABOVE: A Modern Look: Mohawk fade with designs



For today's black women, there are as many hairstyles as there are personalities.

cosmetics company was valued at more than one million dollars, and Overton was then the most successful black businessman in the nation.

Make no mistake, African Americans know beauty, and with over a trillion dollars currently being contributed to the industry, it's safe to say we have always had our hands on what's new and what's now. This was even more apparent when in early 1900s America, Annie Turnbo, credited with being the first to discover Madam C.J. Walker, began making hair-care products catering to black women. Turnbo, who was sickly as a child, was forced to leave school due to frequent illnesses. While out of school, she grew so fascinated with hair and hair care that she often practiced hairdressing with her sister. With expertise in both chemistry and hair care, Turnbo began to develop her own hair-care products. Her aunt, who was an herbalist, aided her in creating her recipes, which straightened the hair without using harsh chemicals or heavy oils. Some products at the time were using lye, which is a chemical that is known to burn if used incorrectly or if left on the hair too long. Turnbo, however, modernized using products that were healthy for black women's hair and made a healthy profit in doing so. Her invention, simply

called The Wonderful Hair Grower, offered real results to its users and caught the eye of the now-famous Madam Walker, who was in search of a product that would cure her psoriasis and dandruff, which caused her hair to fall out. After subscribing to Turnbo's recommendations of scalp massage, clean eating, and sulfur-based hair treatments, Walker's hair grew from ear length to past her shoulders.

After Walker moved to Denver in 1905, she herself began marketing hair products based on Turnbo's, and the two soon became rivals in the hair-care industry. Turnbo even issued a "warning" to potential buyers of Walker's product telling buyers to "beware of imitations." Although both women were successful, Turnbo was the first true self-made millionaire. (The title was wrongly given to Walker, who died with a net worth of roughly \$600,000.)

From the turn of the century to the 1950s, African American hair products were tried and tested on the market, and a new trend developed as blacks grew successful in the hair industry. In 1954, with just \$250 in borrowed capital, former production chemist George E. Johnson and his wife, Joan, decided to throw their hat in the ring to supply a previously underserved African American market. Soon, the couple's new

enterprise, Johnson Products Co., shook the industry with its line of hair-care products, which were at first geared toward men but eventually blossomed into a billion-dollar business that embraced both sexes with the creation of the household brand Afro Sheen. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, blacks often wore their hair in the then-popular afro hairstyle, and Johnson Products took the opportunity to cater its products to this trend and teach other cosmetologists the proper usage. The Johnsons went on to popularize themselves even more when their company became the exclusive sponsor of the television show *Soul Train*, which aired in syndication from the 1970s until 2006. In 1971, the company made history as the first African American-owned company to be listed on the American Stock Exchange. (Johnson Products fell on hard times when the afro went out of style and subsequently declared bankruptcy.)

Along with the afro, dreadlocks remain the most distinctive black hairstyle among other ethnic groups. Ancient Greeks and African Egyptians are said to have worn dreadlocks, and mummies have been found with the locks still intact! When the style became more popular in the late 1970s, it was associated with reggae fans and the Rastafarian culture.



It went on to either be seen as a go-to style for pot smokers or those smelling of patchouli and oils. The late Bob Marley introduced the hairstyle into mainstream culture in the '70s, with Whoopi Goldberg further popularizing the look in the '80s. Lauryn Hill and Lenny Kravitz proudly rocked their dreads in the '90s. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have worn them for as long as we can remember. The style has also been seen lately on red carpets and runways, with some considering nonblacks wearing the style to be cultural appropriation.

After models were seen wearing wigs in the 1960s, wigs were soon seen on city streets and in homes across America. Black women felt the need to emulate their favorite actress or singer, and they saw wigs as an option that could help them do so.

When mentioning the African American beauty industry, the importance of the barber shops and beauty salons that are a staple in black communities across America must be noted. Everything from politics, to music, to fashion, to societal issues can and will be discussed when inside these doors! Patrons are allowed to be themselves and speak their minds without fear of judgement. Some blacks even consider receiving their first haircut or first service from a hair salon a rite of passage.



Ted Gibson and Kimberly Kimble (below), hairstylists extraordinaire and entrepreneurs

Hair salons have always been considered the gateway to entrepreneurship for many business-minded black people. With talent and hard work, one can make a name for oneself in the field as well as in the community. Rising stars in the past few years have even made it onto television, on such shows as *Shear Genius* on cable TV's Bravo channel.

Kimberly Kimble is one of those salon owners. She opened her first salon in 1995 and learned what it really takes to run a business while continuing to perfect her craft. Kimble snagged her first Hollywood gig on the Halle Berry film *B.A.P.S* and has been turning heads with her hair-raising styling ever since. Always having a love for beauty and fashion, the Chicago native now has an A-list clientele that brought her to the attention of executives who gave her a reality show that ran from 2012 to 2017. She has paved the way for many other African American women seeking to be hair stylists themselves and has even launched her own products.

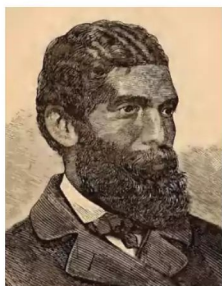


Another notable hairstylist, Ted Gibson, made his mark in New York after traveling the world working as an Aveda global educator. He relocated to the Big Apple with his partner and went on to style the heads of many famous actresses and singers. Also a product launcher, Gibson is known as a world-renowned master stylist who is still paving the way for other gay African American hairstylists.

From wigs to Jheri curls to tapered cuts and braids, African Americans' hair scene has taken a whirlwind trip while still maintaining its "roots." In today's society, many have become entrepreneurs using their skills to give men and women celebrity looks using barbering or cosmetology. False lashes are everywhere, and the addition of human or synthetic hair to create a "hair weave" is popular in America. With the addition of tutorials, the Average Joe or Jane can now learn to master the beauty techniques and products that they can turn into their own business. From selling products door-to-door to becoming full-fledged celebrity stylists, African Americans have taken the beauty industry to another level.

Lions in Winter

By Lorraine Jones



JOHN S. ROCK (1825-1866) Doctor, lawyer, abolitionist and civil rights advocate; USA

First African American admitted to the Massachusetts Bar and one of the first African American men to earn a medical degree; used his education to fight for equity. A day after the passing of the 13th amendment, Rock became the first African American admitted to practice law before the Supreme Court in February 1865.



EARL G. GRAVES, SR. (1935-2020) Entrepreneur, publisher and philanthropist; USA

Founded *BLACK ENTERPRISE* magazine (one of the most notable resources for African American professionals and entrepreneurs), 1970; wrote the best-seller *How to Succeed in Business Without Being White* (1997). Owned a Pepsi-Cola bottling plant, served on several corporate boards, and ultimately formed a minority-owned venture capital firm.



BERNARD HARRIS (born 1956) Scientist, surgeon, astronaut and entrepreneur; USA

First African American to walk in space, in 1995; logged over 438 hours and voyaged more than 7.2 million miles in space. Created the Harris Foundation, 1998, a nonprofit that promotes science and mathematics education in hopes to prevent crime in black youth. His achievements set a precedent of diversity in astronauts and mission teams, paving the way for *Artemis*, NASA's latest astronaut team currently preparing to send the first woman and the next man to walk on the moon in 2024.



BESSIE COLEMAN (1892-1926) Pioneer aviator; USA

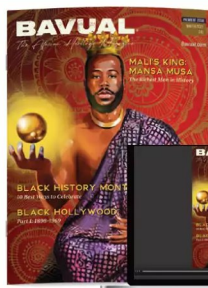
First African American woman and woman of Native American descent to obtain a pilot's license (in France); inspiration to many minority girls with her same sense of adventure and determination to overcome racism and gender discrimination. Coleman used her new status to show off her skills and encourage other young African Americans; she held to her ideals by refusing to participate in airshows that refused entrance to African Americans. After participating in her first airshow in Garden City, N.Y., in September 1922, she excelled as a pilot until her death in 1926.



FANNY M. JACKSON (1837-1913) Pioneer educator; USA

Born a slave, Jackson's thirst for knowledge influenced her to become a pioneer in industrial education. After graduating from Oberlin College in Ohio, the first institution in the United States to accept black and female students, Jackson taught at the Institute for Colored Youth (now Cheyney University), a black high school in Philadelphia, where she went on to become its first African American woman principal from 1869-1902; an influential advocate for higher education who helped define African American education during that time.

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**RONALD MCNAIR (1950-1986)***Physicist and astronaut; USA*

An MIT graduate (Ph.D. in laser physics), McNair was America's second black astronaut to fly to space. Despite facing harsh discrimination, he excelled in science. In 1984, McNair became a NASA mission specialist; he

was one of seven astronauts who tragically died shortly after the launch of the U.S. space shuttle *Challenger* after it exploded 73 seconds later on January 28, 1986. After this national tragedy, Congress established the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, which advocated for low-income and underrepresented students to expand their education after graduation.

**ARNALDO TAMAYO MÉNDEZ***(born 1942) Military officer and astronaut; Cuba*

Officially the first person of African descent to enter space. Born in Guantánamo, Cuba, Méndez served in the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces in Vietnam in the late 1960s.

In 1978, Méndez was selected to be a part of the *Intercosmos* program. During a time of immense racism in Cuba, this was momentous for the island's African community. Méndez was aboard the Soviet *Soyuz 38* spacecraft, September 1980–15 years before NASA astronaut Bernard Harris' spacewalk,

**CLAUDIA JONES (1915-1964)***Feminist, journalist and political activist; Trinidad; (Immigrated to USA as a child; Deported); U.K.*

Jones, a Communist, was forced to leave the U.S. amidst the McCarthy "Red Scare" and settled in the U.K in 1955. In 1958, Jones founded the anti-

racist *West Indian Gazette*, Britain's first black newspaper, with hopes of spreading social equity; the publication shined a light on violence against blacks and harassment based on racial prejudice. Jones led a march on the American embassy on August 28, 1963, in solidarity with the March on Washington in the U.S. She committed her life to ending racism and promoting socialism and the liberation of blacks.

**CHARLOTTE E. RAY (1850-1911)***Legal pioneer; USA*

The United States' first black female lawyer and the first woman to practice law in Washington, D.C.—a major feat at a time of immense intersectional discrimination. When Ray graduated from Howard

University in 1872, she became the third woman of any race to obtain a law degree and be admitted to the U.S. bar. Under the alias C.E. Ray, she took the bar exam without exposing herself as a woman, allowing her to become the first female member of the District of Columbia bar.

**RODNEY KING (1965-2012)** *Police beating victim and civil rights symbol; USA*

King inspired a national wake-up call after his brutal beating by Los Angeles police was caught on camera in 1991. On March 3, 1991, King was stopped by police, ordered out of his vehicle, and savagely beaten for 15 minutes

by officers. King's injuries included skull fractures, facial-nerve damage, numerous broken teeth and bones, and permanent brain damage from being kicked and hit with batons by four officers while other members of law enforcement stood by and watched. One year later, after the acquittal of all four officers, L.A. erupted in anger and frustration. Residents of L.A. took their rage to the streets spreading a message of violence by starting fires, looting, destroying businesses, and assaulting and killing people. This incident was one of the first violent acts of racism and police brutality caught on videotape. (King's comment about the violence following the officers' acquittal—"Can we all get along"—has entered the public protest lexicon.) This graphic visual evidence highlights issues that keep repeating themselves throughout history, such as the death of Latasha Harlins that occurred a month later and the killing of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, George Floyd, and many others.



**CLARENCE M. MITCHELL JR. (1911-1984)** *Civil rights activist; USA*

As head lobbyist for the NAACP, Mitchell actively led the fight for civil rights through legislation. He carried out numerous campaigns on Capitol Hill to push for policies such as the Civil Rights Act of 1957,

1960 and 1964; the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. (For his efforts, he was nicknamed “the 101st U.S. Senator.”) In 1960, Mitchell, along with future Congressman John Lewis, future NAACP chairman Julian Bond, and many other activists co-founded the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which became a major source of student participation in the fight for civil rights.

**ARTHUR WINSTON (1906-2006)**

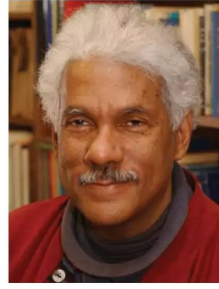
“The Hardest-Working Man”; USA
Winston, a black custodian, embodies the most-admirable work ethic of all time, having worked at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in Los Angeles for 72 years straight (1934-2006).

He established a reputation for always arriving early and never leaving early; he claimed only one sick day—to attend the funeral of his wife, Frances, in 1989. Awarded an “Employee of the Century” citation by President Bill Clinton in 1996, he retired in 2006, the day after his 100th birthday, and passed away less than a month later.

**CHARLES W. MILLS (1951-2021)**

Professor, author and philosopher
An esteemed professor at the CUNY Graduate Center, Northwestern University and other universities, Mills shaped black intellectual history through his views on the relationship between liberalism

and the racial contract. For his influential book *The Racial Contract* (1997), Mills was awarded the 2021 Benjamin E. Lippincott Award, which is presented to a political theorist whose work remains significant at least 15 years after its original publication date. This groundbreaking book helped uncover the relationship between anti-black racism and the liberal political and philosophical tradition of the West. Mills’ work has cemented injustice as a philosophical problem.

**ALBERT J. RABOTEAU (1943-2021)**

Afrocentric scholar; USA

Best known for his contributions to the field of African and African American religious studies, Raboteau transformed academia when he disclosed that enslaved blacks didn’t automatically take on the Christian faith

from their white oppressors. These findings had a great influence on the study of black culture and American religion. Raboteau began teaching at Princeton in 1982 and held this position for 30 years until he retired in June 2013. He was awarded Princeton’s Martin Luther King Day Journey Award for Lifetime Service in 2006 for his efforts to promote King’s dream for America.

**MARY BOWSER (c. 1839?-??)** *Union*

Army spy; USA

Bowser, an African American spy during the Civil War, was an undercover agent, posing as a servant in Confederate President Jefferson Davis’ home and reporting information to Union Army General Ulysses

S. Grant. She played the role of an uneducated servant so well that Davis was often loose with confidential military and government information in her presence. The steady leak of information from such a high position was deemed vital to the Union’s war efforts, leading her to be inducted into the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame in Fort Huachuca, Ariz. Like a good spy, little is known of her background or her postwar years.



NOMINATIONS!

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The Continent of Africa

Land Mass

11.6 million square miles
(30 million square kilometers),
second largest continent after
Asia

Borders

Two oceans, Atlantic and Indian;
two seas, Mediterranean and Red

Age

Approximately 180 million years

Earliest Humans

Homo sapiens, approximately
200,000 years ago

Earliest Civilization

Egyptian, c. 3000 BCE

Population

1.3 billion (16% of Earth's
population)

Languages

1,500, many Western derived
(primarily French and English),
rich and diverse, grouped into
Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan,
Niger-Congo, and Khoisan. They
are composed of many dialects
and include sign languages and
languages with clicks or other
tones that are unique to the
continent. The top 10 languages
are English, French, Arabic,
Aramaic, Swahili, Zulu, Hausa,
Oromo, Yoruba and Igbo.

Religions

There are 4 main groupings—
Christianity (49%), Islam (42%),
traditional faiths (8%) and others
(1%).

Countries

54

Wealthiest Countries by GDP (Gross Domestic Product)

1. Nigeria (\$446.5 billion)
2. South Africa (\$358.8 billion)
3. Egypt (\$302.3 billion)
4. Algeria (\$172.8 billion)
5. Morocco (\$119 billion)

Poorest Countries by GDP

1. The Central African Republic (\$2.4 billion)
2. Burundi (\$3.1 billion)
3. Somalia (\$7.3 billion)
4. Niger (\$14 billion),
5. Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$50 billion)

Resources

Major supplier of oil and gas, as
well as diamonds, gold, nickel
and uranium, pozzolana, fish,
timber, titanium, graphite,
tobacco, iron ore, phosphates,
aluminum, copper and cocoa.

Average Per Capita GDP

\$1,809, lowest of the six
continents

Colonial Powers

UK, France, Germany, Belgium,
Portugal, Spain and Italy,
established by the Berlin
Conference (1884-85). In nearly
all African countries today, the
language used in government
and media is the one imposed
by a recent colonial power,
though most people speak
their native African languages.
Fifty-eight nations gained their
independence between 1847
and 2011, with the majority
having achieved independence
from the mid-1950s through the
mid-1970s.

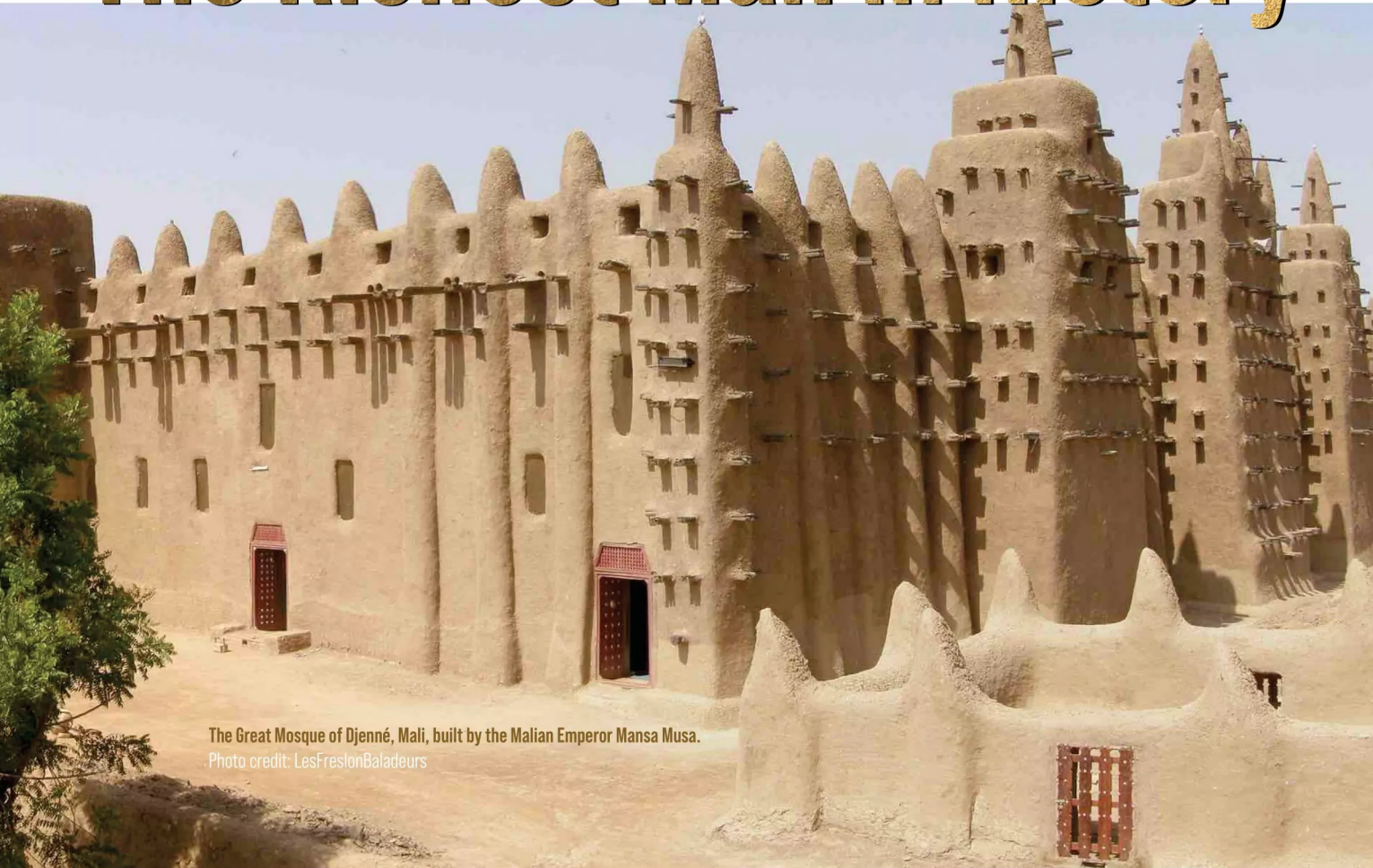
Great Empires

The Kingdom of Kush (c. 1650-
1550 BCE), The Land of Punt
(c. 2613-1493 BCE), Carthage (c.
814-146 BCE), The Kingdom of
Aksum (c. 100-940 CE), The Mali
Empire (c. 1235-1450 CE), The
Songhai Empire (c. 1464-1591
CE), The Great Zimbabwe (1100
-1450 CE).

Some Famous Africans

Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan,
Desmond Tutu, Dr. Wangari
Maathai, Nick Price, Charlize
Theron, Haile Selassie,
Christiaan Neethling Barnard,
Anwar El Sadat, Sade (Helen
Folasade Adu)

The Richest Man in History



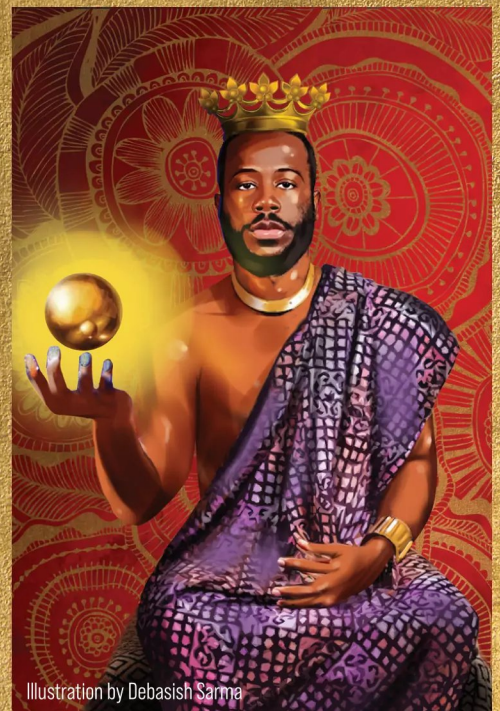
The Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, built by the Malian Emperor Mansa Musa.
Photo credit: LesFreslonBaladeurs

Mansa Musa and the 14th Century Mali Empire

By Rick Bowers

Some have speculated that he was the richest man who ever lived.

No, we're not talking about Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Bill Gates, J.D. Rockefeller or any of the other billionaires you're probably thinking of. We're talking about the 14th century West African leader Mansa* Musa I, who ruled the Mali Empire from approximately 1307 or 1312 until his death in 1332 or 1337.

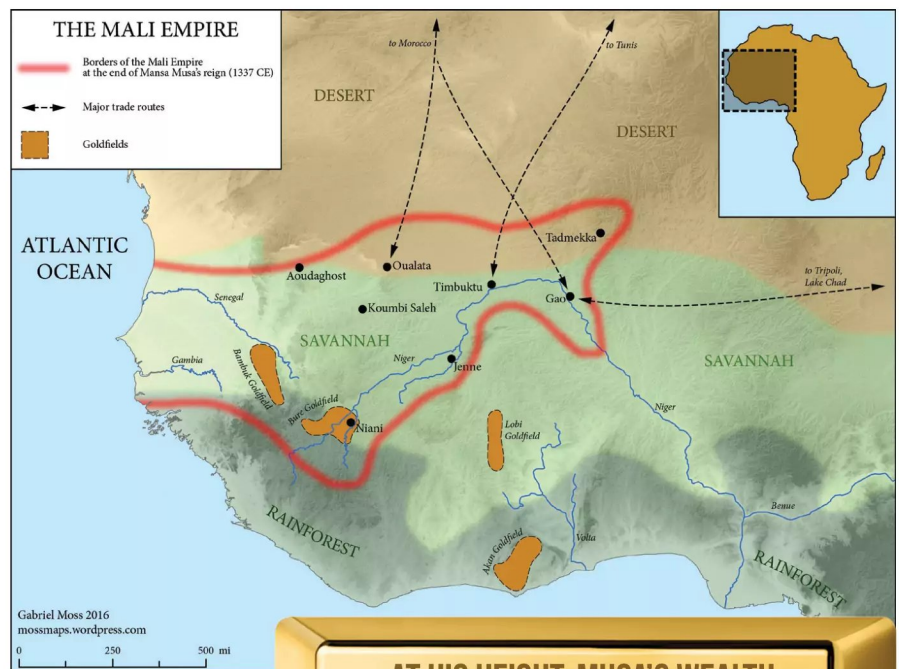


According to *Celebrity Net Worth*, Musa was probably the richest man who ever lived, with an estimated wealth of about \$400 billion in modern terms. Although it's impossible to calculate his exact wealth, an example of its greatness was put on display for the world to admire in 1324 when he made a religious pilgrimage to the Islamic city of Mecca, in Arabia, accompanied by his wife, Inari Konte. He was also accompanied by perhaps 12,000 slaves, each carrying four pounds of gold, and 60,000 other people—an entourage that included soldiers, officials, advisors, merchants and griots. Additionally, he took along dozens—maybe even hundreds—of camels carrying large amounts of gold—perhaps 300 pounds on each. Whether free or slaves, the travelers were all adorned in fine silk with gold brocade.

Even if one accounts for exaggeration on the part of those who described or later wrote about the trip, it would still be a staggering display of wealth. Today, it would be unthinkable for a leader and such a large entourage to embark on a journey of approximately 2,700-4,000 miles that probably took a year to complete round-trip. The costs would be out of this world.

Musa's Empire

The Mali Empire that Musa ruled was founded in c. 1240 by the Malinke (Mandingo) prince Sundiata Keita, who was sometimes called the Lion Prince or Lion King, when he and his allies defeated the Sosso (Susu) Empire and later razed the former capital of the Ghana Empire. While the new Mali Empire was already wealthy before Musa's reign, under his administration and with his



vast army, it doubled in size, encompassing about 24 cities and their surrounding areas. With wealth largely derived from its increased trade; from the tribute of many local leaders; and from its gold, salt, copper, iron and ivory, the empire became the richest in Africa. His army included perhaps 100,000 soldiers with 10,000 horses. It is said that the mansa before Musa, Abu-Bakr Keita II, left the country on a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to see where it ended. When he and his ships didn't return, Musa became the new ruler. The story is that either Abu-Bakr took 2,000 ships with him or that Musa sent 2,000 ships to try to find him and that none returned. Two thousand ships in the 14th century!

This vast empire became almost as large as the United States, had a population of about 20-40 million people, and probably included parts of modern-day Mali, Guinea,

AT HIS HEIGHT, MUSA'S WEALTH CONSTITUTED 10 PERCENT OF THE EARTH'S WEALTH AND HALF OF THE WORLD'S GOLD RESERVES

Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, the Gambia, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Cote d'Ivoire (the Ivory Coast) and Chad. It was about 2,000 miles wide, from the city of Timbuktu in the East to the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in the West. Ibn Battuta, the famous 14th century Moroccan explorer, scholar and writer, visited the empire more than a decade after Musa's death and noted that it took four months to travel from the top to the bottom of the empire. Second in size only to the Mongol Empire at the time, it also had half the world's known gold reserves.

Drawing International Attention

Until Musa's journey to Mecca, he and his huge empire had somehow managed to keep a pretty low profile internationally. That changed dramatically with his pilgrimage. Along the way,



Imagining Musa's lifestyle in the 21st century.

the gold he spent and gave away drew much attention.

As he traveled, he built several mosques and gave vast amounts of charity. It was said that he built a new mosque every Friday. Some of the building sites were in Bako, Direy, Gundam, Dukurey and Wanko; many of them still exist today.

Musa also stopped in Cairo, Egypt, and met with the sultan there. According to the video *Musa I of Mali: The Real Life King Midas*, by Biographics, when he arrived, Musa gave Sultan al-Malik al-Nasir 50,000 gold dinars (approximately \$10.5 million in modern money) as a greeting gift. During his three-month stay in the city, he would go out every day and give gold away to the poor, perhaps donating as much as \$1.3 billion in modern terms, according to the video *AFRICAN GOLD: The Story of Mansa Musa, the Richest Man in History*, by Ancient Origins. Additionally, Musa's entourage bought goods in the local markets, and when the merchants saw how much they were willing to spend, they raised their prices higher and higher. Then, when he reached the cities of Mecca and Medina, he continued to spend vast amounts of gold. Ultimately,

there was so much gold floating around in the area that it caused a devaluation of gold for more than a decade in the Middle East.

According to the African Studies Center at Boston University, citing the *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*, Al-Umari, a man who visited Cairo years after Musa's visit, was told the following by a witness of Musa's visit:

This man [Mansa Musa] flooded Cairo with his benefactions. He left no court emir nor holder of a royal office without the gift of a load of gold. The Cairenes made incalculable profits out of him and his suite in buying and selling and giving and taking. They exchanged gold until they depressed its value in Egypt and caused its price to fall.

...

Gold was at a high price in Egypt until they came in that year. The mithqal did not go below 25 dirhams and was generally above, but from that time its value fell and it cheapened in price and has remained cheap till now. The mithqal does not exceed 22 dirhams or less. This has been the state of affairs for about twelve years until this day by reason of the large amount of gold which they brought into Egypt and spent there.

Indeed, Musa's generosity had accidentally harmed the economies of several nations by bringing down the value of gold, and on the way home, he may have tried to fix the problem by borrowing gold to remove some from the area.

It must have been awe-inspiring for the people of the time to see Musa's massive caravan with the vast number of soldiers needed to guard it against bandits and other armies floating across the land and bringing such a vast amount of charity and gifts. The caravan would probably have stretched across the land as far as people could see.

The Return Home

When Musa returned home, he brought with him Islamic scholars, intellectuals and architects from various countries. He soon built many mosques and other buildings, including Quranic schools, universities and libraries, some of which were designed by architects he'd brought back from Arabia, Egypt and Andalusia (in Spain). In addition to his palace and other buildings, he made

improvements to the University of Sankore (Timbuktu) and built the Djinguereber Mosque in Timbuktu. Some of the buildings from this time still exist today.

He also brought back many Islamic books from his travels. Under his administration, books and knowledge were greatly valued, and education and the arts were highly encouraged. University studies included a wide variety of subjects, such as religion, philosophy, law, literature, poetry, language, art, astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, medicine, geography, ethics, history, business and trades.

The University of Sankore's library came to hold perhaps a million manuscripts, and some of the empire's cities, such as Gao and Timbuktu, became important educational and cultural centers. As a center of Islamic learning with perhaps the greatest library in Africa, Mali drew scholars from many countries, and the empire soon included people from many ethnic groups with different religions who spoke many languages.

According to *World History Encyclopedia*, "Foreign visitors noted the high degree of justice they saw, the safety with which one could travel from place to place, and the abundance of food in all villages."

The Downfall of the Empire—and a Continent

While Musa's grand display of wealth during his pilgrimage demonstrated the empire's greatness, it also had a negative impact on the future.

When Europeans heard about the empire's wealth, mapmakers, such as Abraham Cresques, Spanish cartographer of the

popular *Catalan Atlas*, began to include drawings of Musa sitting on a throne with a gold staff in one hand and a large gold nugget in the other on their maps.

Once this happened, Europeans began to see Mali and Africa as places of unbelievable wealth and consider ways to steal their resources.

And the rest is history.

Not long after Mansa Musa's death, the empire started its decline, partly because of internal power struggles, internal wars, failed leadership, and the establishment of competitive trade centers. Some smaller areas of the empire began to gain independence, and in the following centuries, attacks by the Tuaregs (c. 1433) and the Mossi people would weaken it, and then large parts of it would fall prey to the Songhay Empire (c. 1464-1468) and then the Moroccan Empire (c. mid-17th century). In the coming centuries, Europeans would rape and colonize nearly the entire continent of Africa. As a result, the country of Mali today is only

a shrunken shadow of the great empire of Mali that Mansa Musa helped build.

While many today think of Africa before European slavery and colonization as a jungle full of uncivilized, illiterate primitives who the West was kind enough to enslave and colonize to bring them enlightenment, Mansa Musa's reign is a prime example that much of Africa was already highly developed long before the West "enlightened" it and robbed it of its agricultural, mineral and human resources.

According to Joe Penney, director of the documentary film *Sun of the Soil: The Story of Mansa Musa*, "A lot of the narrative that exists out there is that Africa needs Europe or needs the West when really that couldn't be further from the truth historically. The West has needed Africa and has abused that for centuries."

* "Mansa" was not part of Musa's name but was a title similar to the word "king."

HOW HE COMPARES HISTORICALLY*

Mansa Musa, Mali, King	Incalculable, at least \$400 billion
Andrew Carnegie, USA, Industrialist	\$372 billion
John D. Rockefeller, USA, Industrialist	\$341 billion
Nikolai Alexandrovich Romanov, Russia, Tsar	\$300 billion
Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII, India, Ruler	\$230 billion

*Source: Asktraders.com

HOW HE COMPARES IN 2021**

Mansa Musa, Mali, King	Incalculable, at least \$400 billion
Jeff Bezos, USA, Entrepreneur	\$177 billion
Elon Musk, USA, Industrialist	\$151 billion
Bernard Arnault, France, Business Executive	\$150 billion
Bill Gates, USA, Entrepreneur, Investor	\$124 billion

**Source: Investopedia.com

The following are excerpts from a speech given by Connerly at Harvard University in 1998, titled “America: A Nation of Equals”:

I would submit to you that if you find 50 black people, you will probably find 50 variations of opinions. It just seems that on some issues there is more coalescing around certain points of view than others. But, I dare say, you would not find any great[er] differences between us than you would find among others on issues as well.

And I really hope, I really hope with every fiber of my being that I will live to see the day when that kind of introduction would be totally unnecessary. That no one would have to invoke the question of my race, whatever the hell that is, or my skin color in relation to a position that I am espousing.

That, my friends, is why I have taken upon myself to say to my nation, “Let’s confront this, folks!” Let’s confront it, because you’re putting me and others like me—and I don’t mean 58 and bald—into a little box. You’re herding us into a box and the expectation is that we’re going to stay within that box with respect to how we conduct ourselves. And all my life I have defied operating within the box. ...

People who have come here from different parts of the globe, some born here, different experiences, different cultures, different sexual orientation, disabilities, different races—however we define that—different ethnic backgrounds. How do we forge this—all these differences—into one nation, without the divisible parts? Without any presumptions about our abilities, or the things to which we can aspire? How do we do this? ...

I believed in Lincoln when he talked about our founders bringing forth on this nation—I’m not giving you the actual



words; you know them. Conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. I honestly believed that stuff! And as a young student of the '60s, when the man after whom this great facility is named said on June 11, 1963, “Race has no place in American life and law,” I believed that stuff! To the core of my being, I came away from that period and time believing, as Dr. King said, that this nation would live out the true meaning of its creed and treat me as an individual—not judge me by what I am, but judge me by who I am. If I’m a rotten scoundrel, judge me accordingly. But at least let me prove to you that I’m a rotten scoundrel rather than your presuming that on the basis of some immutable traits. ...

... It’s about dealing with the issue of race. Still the unfinished business—social and legal—of America. It’s about race. It’s about diversity as we call it. ...

It’s about dealing with those subjects of how we interact with our fellow man. And whether we’re big enough to accept doing away with preferences, extending dignity to every person, without

passing judgment ourselves on the value of that person ...

But I want to leave you, as I provide my opening comments, with the essence of what this movement really is about: It’s getting the American people, you among them, to accept the proposition that if this experiment is going to work, none of us, none of us, can expect any different treatment than anybody else. And none of us should tolerate any different treatment of another human being. Because people who are not equal are not free. When your society forces you to check the box, and decides whether you win or lose in the competitions of life on the basis of the box that you check, your freedom is diminished. Because today it might be you, tomorrow it might be you—that doesn’t quite match up with the matrix.

And if that’s the kind of government we want, if that’s the kind of society that we want, the experiment has failed. Let’s call the game right now because it’s failed. It doesn’t work. It will not work if any of our citizens are allowed to be treated differently by their government on the basis of traits with which they are born.

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Letter From a Birmingham Jail

By Martin Luther King, Jr.

In April 1963, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., participated in a campaign in Birmingham, Ala., to protest racism and racial injustice in that city. On April 12, King, along with several other prominent ministers and marchers, was arrested for violating a local ordinance against “parading, demonstrating, boycotting, trespassing and picketing.” He was treated unusually harsh in the city jail. An ally smuggled in a newspaper that contained an open letter from eight white Alabama clergymen titled “A Call to Unity,” which opposed King and his methods. King was provoked to respond to these clergymen with his own open letter. An abridged version is printed here.

April 16, 1963

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham City Jail, I came across your recent statement calling our present activities “unwise and untimely.” Seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. ... But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms. I think I should give the reason for my being in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the argument of “outsiders coming in.” I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every Southern state with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some 85 affiliate organizations all across the South ... Several months ago our local affiliate here in Birmingham invited us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented. ... But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the

prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid. Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. **Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.** We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial “outside agitator” idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds. ... In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: 1) collection of the facts to

determine whether injustices are alive; 2) negotiation; 3) self-purification; and 4) direct action. We have gone through all of these steps in Birmingham. ...

Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of the country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal and unbelievable facts. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation. Then came the opportunity last September to talk with some of the leaders of the economic community. In these negotiating sessions certain promises were made by the merchants—such as the promise to remove the humiliating racial signs from the stores. On the basis of these promises Reverend Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights

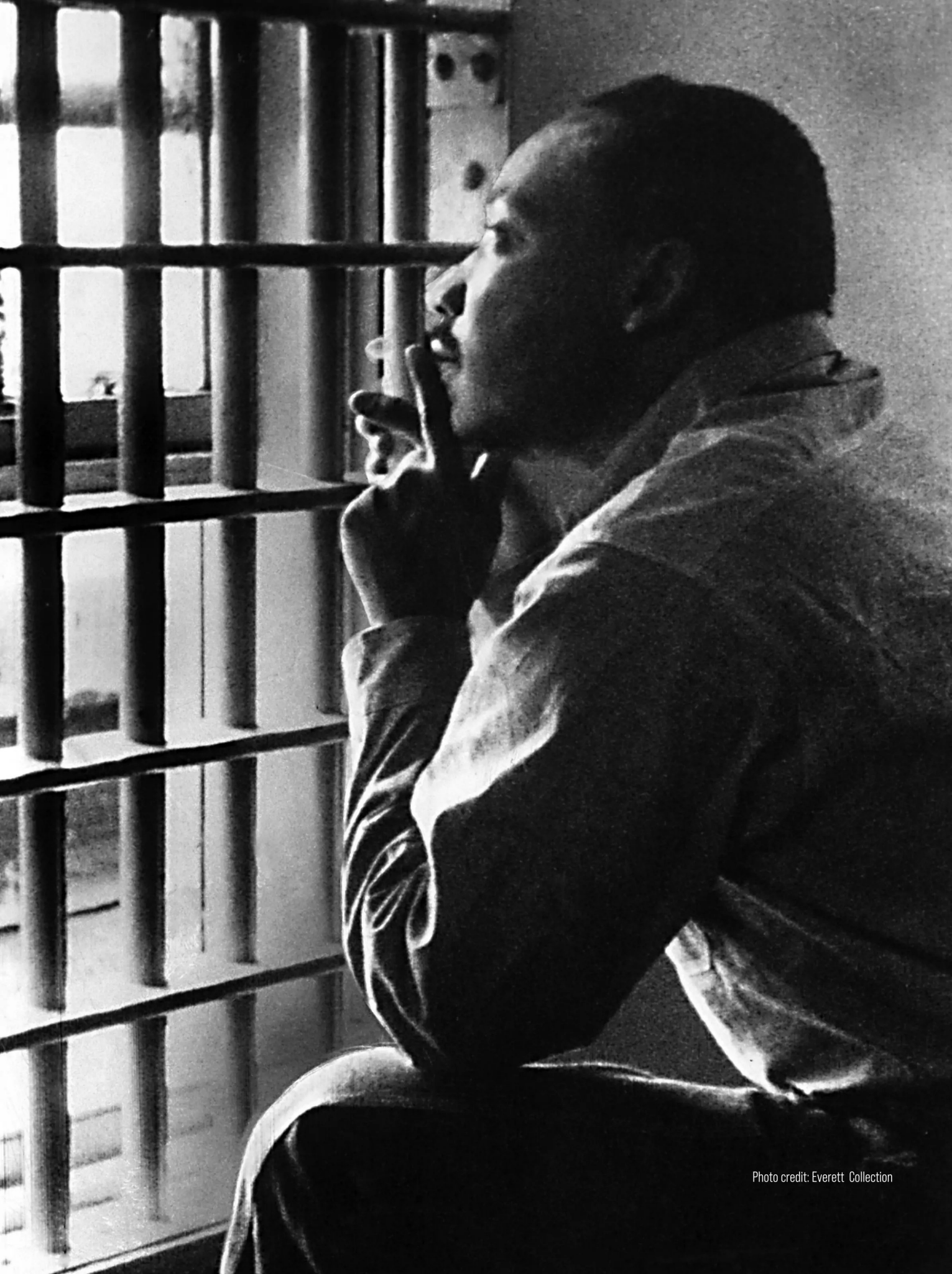


Photo credit: Everett Collection

agreed to call a moratorium on any type of demonstrations. As the weeks and months unfolded we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. The signs remained. As in so many experiences in the past, we were confronted with blasted hopes, and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon us. So we had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community. We were not unmindful of the difficulties involved. So we decided to go through the process of self-purification. We started having workshops on nonviolence and repeatedly asked ourselves the questions, "Are you able to accept the blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?" ... You may well ask, "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. ... Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. ... My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single

gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and give up their unjust posture; but as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals. ***We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.*** Frankly, I have never yet engaged in a direct action movement that was "well timed," according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This "wait" has almost always meant "never." It has been a tranquilizing Thallidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration. We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. ***Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when***

you see the vast majority of your 20 million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see the tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking in agonizing pathos: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" men and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger" and your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title of "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tip-toe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a

time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. ***One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.*** I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all." Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. ***Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority.*** Segregation, to use the

terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful. ... I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. ***One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.*** Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience. We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew

in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws. I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the last few years ***I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizens Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a "more convenient season."*** Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection. ... You spoke of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I started thinking about the fact ***that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a***

force of complacency made up of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation, and a few Negroes in the middle class who, because of a degree of academic and economic security, and at points they profit from segregation, have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up over the nation, the largest and best-known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. This movement is nourished by the contemporary frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination. It is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incurable "devil." ... The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations. He has to get them out. So let him march sometime; let him have his prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; understand why he must have sit-ins and freedom rides. If his repressed emotions do not come out in these nonviolent ways, they will come out in ominous expressions of violence. This is not a threat; it is a fact of history. So I have not said to my people, "Get rid of your discontent." But I have tried to



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say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled through the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. ... In spite of my shattered dreams of the past, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership in the community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, serve as the channel through which our just grievances could get to the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed. I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshippers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and the Negro is your brother." **In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In**

the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, "Those are social issues with which the Gospel has no real concern," and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely other-worldly religion which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular. ... I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader, but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,

King and the other arrestees made bail of \$160,000, posted by Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers. Former U.S. Sen. Doug Jones (D-Alabama) led an annual bipartisan reading of the letter in the U.S. Senate during his tenure in the Senate in 2019 and 2020. He then passed the honor of leading the reading to Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) upon his own election defeat.

On it.

Ending racial injustice requires all of us to work together and take real action.

What can *you* do to help?



Educate yourself about the history of American racism, privilege and what it means to be anti-racist.



Commit to actions that challenge injustice and make everyone feel like they belong, such as challenging biased or racist language when you hear it.



Vote in national and local elections to ensure your elected officials share your vision of public safety.



Donate to organizations, campaigns and initiatives who are committed to racial justice.



Let's come together to take action against racism and fight for racial justice for the Black community.
Visit lovehasnolabels.com/fightforfreedom





**AM I OKAY
TO DRIVE?**

**BUZZED DRIVING
IS DRUNK DRIVING**

